













SELECT PASSAGES ILLUSTRATING  
FLORENTINE LIFE IN THE THIRTEENTH  
AND FOURTEENTH CENTURIES





TEXTS FOR STUDENTS. No. 19

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BY

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## PREFACE

THE extracts in this little book have been chosen to illustrate the social and industrial as well as the political life of Florence in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when the practice of government based on Trade Guilds was in process of development.

To-day, when similar theories of government are widely discussed, the history of this experiment is of vital interest.

During those two centuries and under such rule all the most beautiful churches and palaces of Florence were built, many of its best known poets, novelists, and historians wrote, and some of its most famous sculptors and painters worked. Nearly all of them were members of Trade Guilds.

The aim of this necessarily short and inadequate work is to arouse in its readers a desire for more knowledge of those times. A brief bibliography is appended to the text.

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ESTHER G. ROPER.

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# SELECT PASSAGES ILLUSTRATING FLORENTINE LIFE IN THE THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH CENTURIES

## 1. FOUNDING OF FLORENCE.

IN old time, by means of these colonies many cities were either founded from the beginning, or being already founded were enlarged ; in which number the city of Florence may be reckoned, which was begun by the inhabitants of Fiesole and augmented by colonies. It is quite true, as Dante and Giovanni Villani show, that the city of Fiesole, being situated on the top of a hill, nevertheless, to make her markets more frequented and to give more convenience to those who should wish to come thither with their merchandise, established her mart, not on the top of the hill but in the plain between the foot of the slope and the river Arno. These markets (in my judgment), which were the occasion of the first buildings on that site, made the merchants wish to have commodious warehouses for storing their goods, and these in time became permanent structures.—MACHIAVELLI: *History of Florence*, Book II.

## 2. THE COUNTESS MATILDA (1046-1115).

And also in those same times was the worthy and wise Countess Matilda, the which reigned in Tuscany and in Lombardy, and was well-nigh sovereign lady over all, and did many great things in her time for Holy Church, so that it seems to me reasonable and fitting to speak of their

beginning and of their state, in this our treatise, forasmuch as they were much mixed up with the doings of our city of Florence through the consequences which followed their doings in Tuscany. . . . And she made a will and offered up all her patrimony on the altar of St. Peter, and made the Church of Rome heir of it all.—GIOVANNI VILLANI: *Chronicle*, Book IV., §§ 18, 21.

### 3. THE COUNTRY NOBLES EXACT A ROAD-TAX, 1135.

In the year of Christ 1135 the fortress of Montebuono was standing, which was very strong and pertained to the house of the Bondelmonti, which were Cattani and ancient gentlemen of the country, and from the name of this their castle the house of Bondelmonti took their name; and by reason of its strength, and because the road ran at the foot thereof, therefore they took toll,<sup>1</sup> for the which thing the Florentines did not desire, nor would they have, such a fortress hard by the city; and they went thither with an army in the month of June and took it, on condition that the fortress should be destroyed, and the rest of the possessions should still pertain to the said Cattani, and that they should come and dwell in Florence. And thus the commonwealth of Florence began to grow, and by force, rather than by right, their territory increased, and they subdued to their jurisdiction every noble of the district, and destroyed the fortresses.—GIOVANNI VILLANI: *Chronicle*, Book IV., § 36.

### 4. DISSENSION AMONG FLORENTINE NOBLES, 1177.

Wherefore in the selfsame year there began in Florence dissension and great war among the citizens, the worst that had ever been in Florence; and this was by reason of too

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, for the passage of Florentine merchandise.



great prosperity and repose, together with pride and ingratitude; forasmuch as the house of the Uberti, which were the most powerful and the greatest citizens of Florence, with their allies, both magnates and popolari, began war against the Consuls (which were the lords and rulers of the commonwealth for a certain time and under certain ordinances), from envy of the Government, which was not to their mind; and the war was so fierce and unnatural that well-nigh every day, or every other day, the citizens fought against one another in divers parts of the city, from district to district, according as the factions were, and as they had fortified their towers,<sup>1</sup> whereof there was great number in the city, in height 100 or 120 cubits. And in those times, by reason of the said war, many towers were newly fortified by the communities of the districts, from the common funds of the neighbourhood, which were called Towers of the Fellowships, and upon them were set engines to shoot forth one at another, and the city was barricaded in many places; and this plague endured more than two years, and many died by reason thereof, and much peril and hurt was brought upon the city; but this war among the citizens became so much of use and wont that one day they would be fighting, and the next day they would be eating and drinking together, and telling tales of one another's valour and prowess in these battles; and at last they ceased fighting, in that it irked them for very weariness, and they made peace, and the Consuls remained in their government; albeit, in the end they begot and then brought forth the accursed factions, which were afterwards in Florence, as hereafter in due time we will make mention.—GIOVANNI VILLANI: *Chronicle*, Book V., § 9.

<sup>1</sup> The nobles were organized into "Societies of the Towers." The expenses of fortifying and maintaining these, which communicated with the houses of neighbouring members and served for their common defence, was divided among them all.

## 5. THE FIRST PODESTÀ, 1207.

In the year of Christ 1207 the Florentines chose for the first time a foreign magistrate, for until that time the city had been ruled by the government of citizen consuls, of the greatest and best of the city, with the council of the senate, to wit, of 100 good men; and these consuls, after the manner of Rome, entirely guided and governed the city, and administered law and executed justice; and they remained in office for one year. . . . But afterwards when the city was increased in inhabitants and in vices, and there came to be more ill-deeds, it was agreed for the good of the commonwealth . . . that justice might not miscarry by reason of prayers, or fear, or private malice, or any other cause, that they should invite a gentleman from some other city, who might be their Podestà for a year, and administer civil justice with his assessors and judges, and carry into execution sentences and penalties on the person. . . . Yet the government of the consuls did not therefore cease, but they reserved to themselves the administration of all other things in the commonwealth. — GIOVANNI VILLANI: *Chronicle*, Book V., § 32.

6. THE STORY OF THE RISE OF THE GUELF AND  
Ghibellines in Florence, 1215.

In the year of Christ 1215, M. Gherardo Orlandi being Podestà in Florence, one M. Bondelmonte dei Bondelmonti, a noble citizen of Florence, had promised to take to wife a maiden of the house of the Amidei, honourable and noble citizens; and afterwards as the said M. Bondelmonte, who was very charming and a good horseman, was riding through the city, a lady of the house of the Donati called to him, reproaching him as to the lady to whom he was betrothed, that she was not beautiful or worthy of him,

and saying : "I have kept this my daughter for you ;" whom she showed to him, and she was most beautiful ; and immediately by the inspiration of the devil he was so taken by her, that he was betrothed and wedded to her, for which thing the kinsfolk of the first betrothed lady, being assembled together, and grieving over the shame which M. Bondelmonte had done to them, were filled with the accursed indignation, whereby the city of Florence was destroyed and divided. For many houses of the nobles swore together to bring shame upon the said M. Bondelmonte, in revenge for these wrongs. And being in council among themselves, after what fashion they should punish him, whether by beating or killing, Mosca de' Lamberti said the evil word : "Thing done has an end" ; to wit, that he should be slain ; and so it was done ; for on the morning of Easter of the Resurrection the Amidei of San Stefano assembled in their house, and the said M. Bondelmonte coming from Oltrarno, nobly arrayed in new white apparel, and upon a white palfrey, arriving at the foot of the Ponte Vecchio on this side, just at the foot of the pillar where was the statue of Mars, the said M. Bondelmonte was dragged from his horse by Schiatta degli Uberti, and by Mosca Lamberti and Lambertuccio degli Amidei assaulted and smitten, and by Oderigo Fifanti his veins were opened and he was brought to his end ; and there was with them one of the counts of Gangalandi. For the which thing the city rose in arms and tumult ; and this death of M. Bondelmonte was the cause and beginning of the accursed parties of Guelfs and Ghibellines in Florence, albeit long before there were factions among the noble citizens and the said parties existed by reason of the strifes and questions between the Church and the Empire.—GIOVANNI VILLANI : *Chronicle*, Book V., § 38.

## 7. EARLY CUSTOMS OF THE FLORENTINES.

And note, that at the time of the said Popolo, and before and afterwards for a long time, the citizens of Florence lived soberly, and on coarse food, and with little spending, and in manners and graces were in many respects coarse and rude ; and both they and their wives were clad in coarse garments, and many wore skins without lining, and caps on their heads, and all wore leather boots on their feet, and the Florentine ladies wore boots without ornaments, and the greatest were contented with one close-fitting gown of scarlet serge or camlet, girt with a leathern girdle after the ancient fashion, with a hooded cloak lined with miniver, which hood they wore on their head ; and the common women were clad in coarse green cambric after the same fashion ; and 100 lire was the common dowry for wives, and 200 or 300 lire was, in those times, held to be excessive ; and the most of the maidens were twenty or more years old before they were wedded. After such habits and plain customs then lived the Florentines, but they were true and trustworthy to one another and to their commonwealth, and with their simple life and poverty they did greater and more virtuous things than are done in our times with more luxury and with more riches.—GIOVANNI VILLANI : *Chronicle*, Book V., § 69.

## 8. THE BROTHERS OF THE MISERICORDIA.

In 1240, when the citizens of Florence were busily occupied in the selling, or rather the manufacture, of cloth, which by reason of its quality and excellence was sought after by all the cities of the world to such a degree that two annual fairs were held—one on St. Simon's Day and the other at Martinmas—to each of which all the richest merchants in Italy came, and sales were made to the

amount at each fair of from fifteen to sixteen millions of florins, it was necessary to have porters always at hand to carry the goods to and fro between the dyers' and washers' shops and any other places which suited the convenience of the manufacturers. Therefore most of the porters had to remain in the Piazza San Giovanni or the Piazza Santa Maria del Fiore to wait for the chance, which often came, of carrying goods to the places assigned by the Republic. Now in that Piazza San Giovanni there was a cellar which joined other similar cellars, believed to have belonged to the Adimari; but as it had always stood open because it had been flooded by the inundations of the Arno, the porters had taken possession of the place as a refuge from rain and cold while waiting for a job. They used to have a fire there and play dice when work was slack. There was amongst the seventy or eighty porters who were in the habit of sitting there a certain Piero di Luca Borsi, a man of advanced age and very devout. He was greatly scandalized by the many blasphemies uttered by his companions against the holy name of God; and as he was the head of the men, he resolved to suggest that each time one of them dared to blaspheme God and His Holy Mother he should put a "crazia" into a little box to expiate this grave sin. This proposal pleased all his companions and was agreed to, all promising that the rule should not be violated but kept to the glory of the Divine Majesty. When they had persevered a long time in this devout practice, a large amount of money accumulated in the aforesaid box, seeing which Piero di Luca made another proposal, which was to have six ambulances made, large enough to hold a person lying down, and to give one to each quarter of the city, and to appoint for each a bearer, who should be changed every week. The ambulances were to carry to the hospital poor sick persons and those who had met with accidents, the dead bodies of drowned and



murdered people, and those who were found helpless in the gutter.

He whose turn it was to carry the ambulance was to take from the box of fines a "giulio." This wise proposal of Piero di Luca pleased them all, and they swore to keep this rule faithfully even without payment, because the reward of our good actions in this world can only be looked for in the next world from the hands of God. For many years they continued this work of mercy, the citizens applauding them greatly. They knew they could have earned more money for each journey, but they kept faithful to the wish of Piero. About this time he died, and another leader was chosen. It occurred to him under the inspiration of God to procure a picture with the figure of the dead Christ on it, at the foot of which he would place a box with the inscription: "Give alms to the poor and sick and needy of the city." This picture was placed in the Church of San Giovanni on his festival, January 13. The idea was, with the money obtained, to build a room which should be used as an oratory, where the members might pray and also discuss the business of the Brothers of the Misericordia. This generous plan was commended and so quickly put into practice that the said box would not hold all the money poured in by the faithful. As much as five hundred florins was collected, which enabled them to buy some rooms above the cellars, and this was the foundation of the Misericordia.—LANDINI: *L'Istoria della Misericordia*, pp. xxv-xxvii (condensed).

#### 9. THE GOLDEN FLORINS FIRST STRUCK, 1252.

The host of the Florentines having returned, and being at rest after the victories aforesaid, the city increased greatly in state and in riches and lordship and in great quietness; for the which thing the merchants of Florence, for the honour of the commonwealth, ordained with the

people and commonwealth that golden coins should be struck at Florence ; and they promised to furnish the gold, for before the custom was to strike silver coins of 12 pence the picce. And then began the good coins of gold, 24 carats fine, the which are called golden florins, and each was worth 20 soldi. And this was in the time of the said M. Filippo degli Ugoni of Brescia, in the month of November, the year of Christ 1252. The which florins weighed eight to the ounce, and on one side was the stamp of the lily and on the other of St. John.—GIOVANNI VILLANI: *Chronicle*, Book VI., § 53.

#### 10. THE GUILDS OF ARTS FORMED, 1266.

When the news came to Florence and to Tuscany of the discomfiture of Manfred, the Ghibellines and the Germans began to be discouraged ; . . . wherefore the people of Florence, which were at heart more Guelf than Ghibelline, through the losses they had received, one of his father, another of his son, a third of his brothers, at the defeat of Montaperti, likewise began to take courage, and to murmur and to talk through the city, complaining of the spendings and the outrageous burdens which they endured from Count Guido Novello, and from the others which were ruling the city ; whence those which were ruling the city of Florence for the Ghibelline party, hearing in the city the said tumult and murmuring, and fearing lest the people should rebel against them, by a sort of half measure, and to content the people, chose two knights of the Jovial Friars of Bologna as Podestàs of Florence. . . . And the said M. Roderigo was the beginner of this Order ; but it endured but a short while, for the fact followed the name, to wit, they gave themselves more to joviality than to aught else. These two friars were brought thither by the people of Florence ; . . . and they ordained thirty-six good men,

merchants and artificers of the greatest and best which there were in the city, the which were to give counsel to the said two Podestàs, and were to provide for the spendings of the commonwealth. . . . And the said thirty-six met together every day to take counsel as to the common well-being of the city, in the shop and court of the consuls of Calimala; . . . the which made many good ordinances for the common weal of the city, among which they decreed that each one of the seven principal Arts in Florence should have a college of consuls, and each should have its ensign and standard, to the intent that, if any one in the city rose with force of arms, they might under their ensigns stand for the defence of the people and of the commonwealth. And the ensigns of the seven greater Arts were these: the judges and notaries, an azure field charged with a large golden star; the merchants of Calimala,<sup>1</sup> to wit, of French cloths, a red field with a golden eagle on a white globe; money changers, a red field sewn with golden florins; wool merchants,<sup>2</sup> a red field charged with a white sheep;

<sup>1</sup> The Calimala Guild dealt in foreign cloth. In the fourteenth century it had agencies in France, Spain, Portugal, Flanders, England, and Germany. Its consuls were supreme over all persons and causes within the guild. Villani writes: "The Calimala merchants receive annually (A.D. 1338) more than 10,000 pieces of cloth from over the mountains and from France, to be improved in Florence. Their value exceeds 300,000 gold florins, and is all sold in Florence, without including such as was sent out of the city and sold in the East, along the Mediterranean, and in the principal cities of Europe" (XI., 94).

<sup>2</sup> The Guild of Wool was the oldest trade society in Florence; its earliest extant statutes are dated 1309. Subordinate to it were the guilds of the shearers, the washers, the dyers, the carders, the spinners (male and female), the weavers, and the winders. Among the regulations of the Guild of Wool were the following: All noisy occupations were strictly forbidden between the tolling of the three o'clock bell (the general time for work to cease) and the striking of the bell at matins. Overtime work was forbidden. No worker was permitted to carry on his trade even secretly after compline. Every manufacturer was required to pay sufficient wages, the amount being submitted to the consuls of the guild for approval; the average wage was about one shilling and sixpence a day.



physicians and apothecaries,<sup>1</sup> a red field, thereupon St. Mary with her son Christ in her arms; silk merchants and mercers,<sup>2</sup> a white field charged with a red gate, from the title of Porta Santa Maria; furriers, arms vair, and in one corner an Agnus Dei upon an azure field. The next five, following upon the greater arts, were regulated afterwards when the office of Priors of the Arts was created, as in time hereafter we shall make mention; and they had assigned to them after a similar fashion to the seven Arts, standards and arms: to wit, the Baldrigari (that is, retail merchants of Florentine cloths, of stockings, of linen cloths, and hucksters), white and red standard; butchers, a

<sup>1</sup> In 1197 the consuls of the Guild of Doctors and Apothecaries (with the consuls of other guilds) officially signed the anti-imperial league of Tuscan cities. No doctor might be admitted a member of the college nor be allowed to practise unless he had first been publicly examined by the consuls of the guild. In 1455 Matteo Palmieri, apothecary, poet, and member of the guild, was appointed ambassador to the King of Naples. "The ambassador," says the historian Giovanni Battista Gello, "behaved himself very wisely, and the King did ask what manner of man he was in his own country, and it was told him that he was an apothecary. 'If the apothecaries,' quoth the King, 'be so wise and learned in Florence, what be their physicians?'"

Some crafts subordinated to this guild were: Printing, making and selling of books, purse making, straw and felt hat making, hair-dressing, tennis-bat and ball making, ornamental sword making. About 1339 the Guild of Painters was enrolled as a subordinate guild of the apothecaries, "painters being beholden for their supplies of pigments to the apothecaries and their agents in foreign lands."

Among the members of the apothecaries' guild were: Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), poet and statesman; Leo Battista Alberti (1404-1472), physician, astronomer, and architect; Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499), surgeon and philosopher; Paolo Toscanelli (1397-1482), astronomer and geographer; Amerigo Vespucci (1451-1512), merchant and explorer.

<sup>2</sup> The Guild of Silk was called in the fourteenth century the Guild of Silk and Cloth of Gold Manufacturers and Goldsmiths. The code of 1335 gave to the tribunal of the guild (1) the direction of all that pertained to commerce in silk; (2) the administration of justice to every person in the guild. Among goldsmiths enrolled in the guild were Lorenzo Ghiberti, maker of the Baptistery gates; Benvenuto Cellini, artist and worker in metals; Filippo Brunelleschi, architect of the Cathedral dome.

yellow field with a black goat ; shoemakers, the transverse stripes, white and black, known as the pezza gagliarda [gallant piece] ; workers in stone and in timber,<sup>1</sup> a red field charged with the saw, and the axe, and the hatchet, and the pick-axe ; smiths and iron workers, a white field charged with large black pincers.—GIOVANNI VILLANI : *Chronicle*, Book VII., § 13.

11. POPE GREGORY X. TRIES TO MAKE PEACE BETWEEN  
THE GUELFs AND THE GHIBELLINES, 1273.

The aforesaid Pope, the year after his coronation, set forth with his court from Rome to go to Lyons-on-Rhone to the council which he had summoned, and he entered into Florence with his cardinals, and with King Charles, and with the Emperor Baldwin of Constantinople. . . . And with the Pope, and with King Charles, there came to Florence many other lords and barons, on the 18th day of June, in the year of Christ 1273, and were received with honour by the Florentines. And the situation of Florence being pleasing to the Pope, by reason of the convenience of the water, and the pure air, and that the court found much comfort there, he purposed to abide there, and pass the summer in Florence. And finding that this good city of Florence was being destroyed by reason of the parties (the Ghibellines being now in exile), he determined that they should return to Florence, and should make peace with the Guelfs ; and so it came about, and on the 2nd day of July in the said year, the said Pope, with his cardinals, and with King Charles, and with the said Emperor Baldwin, and with all the barons and gentlemen of the court (the people of Florence being assembled on the sands of the Arno hard

<sup>1</sup> The Guild of Masters of Stone and Wood included the following famous sculptors, painters, and architects : Arnolfo di Cambio, Michel Angelo, Giotto da Bordone, Donatello, Taddeo Gaddi, Andrea Orcagna, Luca della Robbia, Leonardo da Vinci.

by the head of the Rubaconte Bridge, great scaffolds of wood having been erected in that place whereon stood the said lords), gave sentence, under pain of excommunication if it were disobeyed, upon the differences between the Guelf and Ghibelline parties, causing the representatives of either party to kiss one another on the mouth, and to make peace, and to give sureties and hostages. . . . And straightway the said peace was broken; wherefore the Pope was sorely disturbed, and departed from Florence, leaving the city under an interdict.—GIOVANNI VILLANI: *Chronicle*, Book VII., § 42.

## 12. CREATION OF THE OFFICE OF PRIORS, 1282.

In the year of Christ 1282, the city of Florence being under government of the order of the fourteen good men as the Cardinal Latino had left it, to wit, eight Guelfs and six Ghibellines, as we afore made mention, it seemed to the citizens that this government of fourteen was too numerous and confused; and to the end so many divided hearts might be at one, and, above all, because it was not pleasing to the Guelfs to have the Ghibellines as partners in the government . . . they annulled the said office of the fourteen and created and made a new office and lordship for the government of the said city of Florence, to wit, the Priors of the Arts; the which name, Priors of the Arts, means to say "the first," chosen over the others; and it was taken from the Holy Gospel, where Christ says to His disciples, "Vos estis priores." And this invention and movement began among the consuls and council of the art of Calimala, to which pertained the wisest and most powerful citizens of Florence, and the most numerous following, both magnates and popolani, of those which pursued the calling of merchants, seeing the most part of them greatly loved the Guelf party and Holy Church. And the first

priors of the Arts were three, whereof the names were these: Bartolo di M. Jacopo de' Bardi, for the sesto of Oltrarno and for the art of Calimala; Rosso Bacherelli, for the sesto of San Piero Scheraggio, for the art of the exchangers; Salvi del Chiaro Girolami, for the sesto of San Brancazio and for the woollen art. And their office began in the middle of June of the said year, and lasted for two months, unto the middle of August, and thus three priors were to succeed every two months, for the three greater Arts. And they were shut up to give audience (sleeping and eating at the charges of the commonwealth), in the house of the Badia where formerly, as we have aforesaid, the Ancients were wont to assemble in the time of the old Popolo, and afterwards the fourteen. And there were assigned to the said priors six constables and six messengers to summon the citizens; and these priors, with the Captain of the Popolo, had to determine the great and weighty matters of the commonwealth, and to summon and conduct councils and make regulations. And when the office had endured the two months, it was pleasing to the citizens; and for the following two months they proclaimed six, one for each sesto, and added to the said three greater Arts the art of the doctors and apothecaries, and the art of the Porta Santa Maria, and that of the furriers and skindressers; and afterwards from time to time all the others were added thereto, to the number of the twelve greater Arts; and there were among them magnates, as well as popolani, great men of good repute and works, and which were artificers or merehants. And thus it went on until the second Popolo was formed in Florence, as hereafter, in due time, we shall relate. From thenceforward there were no magnates among them, but there was added thereto the gonfalonier of justice. — GIOVANNI VILLANI: *Chronicle*, Book VII., § 79.

## 13. THE COURT OF LOVE, 1283.

In the year 1283 in the month of June at the festival of St. John, the city of Florence being in a good and happy state of repose, tranquil and at peace, and prosperous for merehants and citizens, in the quarter of S. Felicita across the Arno there was formed under the leadership of the Rossi family and their neighbours a band of men a thousand and more strong, all robed in white, with a captain called "Lord of Love." This troop did nothing but play games and divert themselves with balls, to which came ladies and cavaliers and other citizens; they went about the streets with trumpets and hautboys in great joy and mirth, their tables being open to all for dinner and supper. This company lasted two months, and was the noblest and most famous there ever was in Florence and Tuscany. To it there came from various parts many gentlemen and jesters, and all were received and welcomed honourably. And note that in those days the city of Florence and the citizens were in the most prosperous condition they had ever known, and it lasted till the year 1284. . . . In those days there were in Florence three hundred cavaliers who kept open house, and many companies of knights and young men who had tables spread morning and night, and at Easter gave away many gowns of fur. Wherefore from Lombardy and all over Italy there came to Florence many buffoons and jesters and courtiers, who were well received, and no stranger of honourable rank passed through Florence who was not invited by these companies, who accompanied him on horseback inside or outside the city as he required. —GIOVANNI VILLANI: *Chronicle*, Book VII., § 89.

## 14. GIANO DELLA BELLA, 1292.

But the nobles and magnates of the city waxed arrogant, and did many wrongs to the popolani by beating them and



putting other insults upon them. Wherefore many worthy citizens among the popolani and merchants strengthened the popolani government. Among these was a prominent and influential citizen named Giano della Bella, a wise, good, and worthy man, of high spirit and of good family, who resented the outrages committed by the nobles. He having recently been chosen as one of the priors, who entered on their office on February 15, 1292, had constituted himself head and leader of the movement, and was supported by the popolani and by his colleagues. And the priors added one to their number to hold equal authority with the rest, whom they called gonfalonier of justice . . . to whom was to be committed a standard with the arms of the people—that is, the red cross on a white ground—and a thousand foot-soldiers, all armed and bearing the said ensign or device, who were to be ready at every call of the said gonfalonier in any open place in the city, or wherever need might require. And they made laws, which were called Ordinances of Justice, against those magnates who should commit outrages against the popolani; and it was enacted that (1) one kinsman should be answerable for another, and that (2) the crimes might be proved by public report established by two witnesses. They decided, moreover, that all the members of any family who had had knights among its members should be accounted magnates, and that such persons should be ineligible for the office of prior, or gonfalonier of justice, or for their colleges; and the said families numbered thirty-three in all. And they further decreed that the outgoing priors, with certain men added to their number, should elect the new ones. And they bound the twenty-four guilds to observe these laws, granting certain powers to the consuls of the guilds.—DINO COMPAGNI: *Cronaca Fiorentina*, Book I., 11.

## 15. ORDINANCES OF JUSTICE, A.D. 1293.

It is provided and ordained that in case any of the nobles of the city or territory of Florence should commit, or cause to be committed, any injury against the person of any man of the people [popolani] of the city or territory so that from such injury death should ensue or shameful disfigurement of face or amputation of limb . . . then let Messer la Podestà send—and he is held and bound to send, putting aside all excuse and delay—one or more of the judges or cavaliers, with such of his officers as he may think fit, together with the said gonfalonier and the said armed men, with a strong hand and with force, to the houses and possessions of such noble as shall have committed, or caused to be committed, any such injury as those hereinbefore mentioned; and shall destroy and lay waste . . . such houses and possessions as may be in the city, suburbs, or townships of Florence, utterly from the foundations and from the roots of them before quitting the spot where such houses and goods are situated.—GIUDICI: *Storia dei Municipii*, Vol. II., p. 327.

## 16. STRIFE AMONG THE PEOPLE.

The arrogance of the evil men [among the popolani] increased greatly because the magnates were punished when they had incurred penalties, for the magistrates feared to violate the laws which required them to punish effectually. This “effectual punishment” was carried to such a length that the magistrates feared that, if a man who had been accused remained unpunished, the magistrate [in that case] would have no defence or excuse in the eye of the law, for which cause no accused person remained unpunished. The magnates, therefore, complained loudly of the laws, and said to those who carried them out: “If

the horse is running along and hits a popolano in the face with its tail, or if in a crowd one man gives another a blow in the chest without intending harm, or if some children of tender age begin quarrelling, an accusation will be made. But ought men to have their houses and property destroyed for such trifles as these?" — DINO COMPAGNI: *Cronaca Fiorentina*, Book I., 12.

### 17. THE ARTS IN FLORENCE AT THE END OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

Not only was there no city in Tuscany which durst offend Florence, but the power of Pisa being greatly diminished, and the name of the Ghibelline faction almost extinguished, that republic, as well as all the other communes, had come to be obedient to Florence either as subjects or as friends. Through the leisure resulting from this tranquillity, letters were then in a very flourishing condition. Wherefore that age produced many men of high excellence, and art began to arise at the same time, having been, as it were, dragged forth from its lurking-place amid the thickest darkness. The reputation of the Florentine merchants, based on their deserved character for industry and integrity, stood exceedingly high, not only throughout Italy, but in every country in the world. And the citizens, following the example of the commonwealth, were rivalling each other in the construction of magnificent buildings and palaces.<sup>1</sup> — AMMIRATO: *Istorie Fiorentine*, Book IV.

<sup>1</sup> The following 13th-14th-century buildings were the work of the Masters of the Comacine Guild, and the Guild of Masters of Stone and Wood, and the Guild of Goldsmiths:

*Churches.*—The Baptistery of San Giovanni (rebuilt 1202-94), the Duomo, or Santa Maria del Fiore (founded in the eighth century and rebuilt 1101-1298), Santa Maria Novella (begun in 1279), Santa Croce (begun in 1295), San Marco (begun in 1290), San Miniato (rebuilt by Calimala Guild in the thirteenth century).



## 18. BUILDING OF THE PALAZZO VECCHIO.

In the said year 1298 the commonwealth and people of Florence began to build the Palace of the Priors, by reason of the differences between the people and the magnates, forasmuch as the city was always in jealousy and commotion, at the election of the priors afresh every two months, by reason of the factions which had already begun; and the priors, which ruled the city and all the republic, did not feel themselves secure in their former habitation. . . . And they built the said palace where had formerly been the houses of the Uberti, rebels against Florence, and Ghibellines; and on the site of those houses they made a piazza, so that they might never be rebuilt.—GIOVANNI VILLANI: *Chronicle*, Book VIII., § 26.

## 19. DANTE AND THE SMITH.

The most excellent poet of our native tongue, whose fame will never diminish, Dante Alighieri, the Florentine, lived in Florence near to the family of the Adimari. . . . Passing by the Gate of San Piero he saw a smith beating iron upon his anvil, and all the while he sang from Dante's poem as one singeth a song, and he so jumbled his verses, clipping here and adding there, that he seemed to Dante

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*Palaces.*—The Bargello (begun in 1258), the Palazzo Vecchio (1298-1314), and the Badia (990-1285).

*Bridges.*—Ponte Vecchio (1080-1333), Santa Trinita (1252), Alle Grazie (1237).

The decree of the Signoria for the building of the Cathedral was as follows: "Arnolfo di Cambio, architect of our commune, is to make a model or design for the renovation of Santa Reparata, of such noble and extreme magnificence that neither the industry nor the genius of man shall be able to invent anything grander or more beautiful that shall surpass it." No plan should be accepted unless it was "such as to render the work worthy of an ambition which had become very great, inasmuch as it resulted from the combined desires of a great number of citizens united in one sole will" (*Notizie Storiche delle Chiese Fiorentine*).

to be doing him a very great injury. He said nothing, but he approached the smith's shop—there where he had many irons with which he plied his trade. And Dante took the hammer and flung it into the street; he took the scales and threw them into the street; and thus he threw out many of the tools. The smith, turning upon him with a threatening gesture, cried:

“What the devil are you doing? Are ye mad?”

Dante asked him: “What art thou doing?”

“I am doing my own business,” answered the smith, “and ye are spoiling my tools, throwing them into the street.”

Said Dante: “If thou desirest that I should not spoil thy things, do not thou spoil mine.”

Said the smith: “What am I spoiling of yours?”

Dante answered: “Thou art singing out of my book, and are not singing it as I wrote it. I have no other trade but this, and thou art spoiling it for me.”

The smith was taken aback, and knowing not what to reply, he gathered his things together and returned to his work. And now if he wisheth to sing, he singeth Tristan or Lancelot and leaveth Dante alone.<sup>1</sup>—SACCHETTI: *Novelle*, 114, tr. M. G. Steegmann.

## 20. RISE OF THE BIANCHI AND NERI, 1300.

In the said time our city of Florence was in the greatest and happiest state which had ever been since it was rebuilt, or before, alike in greatness and power and in number of people, forasmuch as there were more than 30,000 citizens in the city, and more than 70,000 men capable of arms in the country within her territory; and she was great in nobility of good knights, and in free populace, and

<sup>1</sup> There was no one in Florence who could not read; even the donkey boys sang verses out of Dante (*Dino Compagni*).

in riches, ruling over the greater part of Tuseany ; whereupon the sin of ingratitude, with the instigation of the enemy of the human race, brought forth from the said prosperity pride and corruption, which put an end to the feasts and joyaunce of the Florentines. . . . But now it came to pass that through envy there arose factions among the citizens; and one of the chief and greatest began in the sesto of offence, to wit, of Porte San Piero, between the house of the Cerchi and the Donati ; on the one side through envy, and on the other through rude ungraciousness. . . . And the said Cerehi were the heads of the White party in Florence. . . . And with them took part many houses and families of popolani, and lesser craftsmen, and all the Ghibelline magnates and popolani ; and by reason of the great following which the Cerehi had, the government of the city was almost all in their power. On the side of the Blacks were all they of the house of the Pazzi, who may be counted with the Donati as the chiefs. . . . It came to pass a little while after that certain both of one party and of the other were riding through the city armed and on their guard. . . . On the evening of the first of May, in the year 1300, while they were watching a dance of ladies which was going forward on the piazza of Santa Trinità, one party began to scoff at the other, and to urge their horses one against the other, whence arose a great conflict and confusion, and many were wounded, and, as ill-luck would have it, Ricoverino, son of M. Ricovero of the Cerchi, had his nose cut off his face ; and through the said scuffle that evening all the city was moved with apprehension and flew to arms. This was the beginning of the dissensions and divisions in the city of Florence and in the Guelf party, whence many ills and perils followed on afterwards. — GIOVANNI VILLANI, *Chronicle*, Book VIII., § 39.

## 21. A RISING.

The good citizens remained very angry, and lost hope of peace. The Cavalcanti and many others complained, and so greatly did men's minds become inflamed that the people armed themselves and began to attack one another.

The della Tosa and the Medici came armed into the old market, shooting with their crossbows, going thence towards the Corso degli Adimari and down through Calimala; and they attacked and overthrew a barricade in the Corso which was guarded by people who had more mind for vengeance than for peace. . . . The leaders of the Black party had prepared fireworks, believing that there must certainly be fighting; and they came to an understanding with one Ser Neri Abati, Prior of S. Piero Scheraggio, a wicked and dissolute man, his kinsmen's enemy, and ordered him to set the first fire alight. And so, on June 10, 1304, he set fire to his kinsmen's houses in Orto San Michele. From the old market fire was shot into Calimala, and it spread so greatly through not being checked that, added to the first fire, it burnt many houses and palaces and shops.

In Orto San Michele there was a large loggia, with an oratory of Our Lady, in which there were many votive images of wax, and when in addition to the heat of the air these caught fire, all the houses which were round that spot were burnt, besides the warehouses of Calimala and all the shops which were round the old market as far as the new market, and the houses of the Cavalcanti and the houses in Vacchereccia and Porta Santa Maria as far as the old bridge; for it is said that more than 1,900 dwellings were burnt, and no remedy could be applied.

And thieves openly plunged into the fire to rob and carry away what they could get, and nothing was said to them; and whoever saw his property being carried off

durst not demand it back, because the city was in utter confusion.—DINO COMPAGNI: *Cronaca Fiorentina*, III., 8.

## 22. STRIFE IN FLORENCE.

Thus is our city afflicted! Thus our citizens remain obstinate in evil-doing! And that which is done one day is blamed the next. Sages were wont to say: "The wise man does naught of which he may repent." But in this city and by these citizens nothing is done so praiseworthy but it is reputed to the contrary and blamed. Men slay one another here; evil is not punished by law; but in proportion as the evil-doer has friends and can spend money, he gets off scot-free from the crime he has committed.—DINO COMPAGNI: *Cronaca Fiorentina*, III., 42.

## 23. THE FALL OF THE BRIDGE OF CARRAIA.

In this same time that the Cardinal da Prato was in Florence, and was beloved by the people and by the citizens, who hoped that he might set them at peace one with another, on the first day of May, 1304, just as in the good old times of the tranquil and good estate of Florence, it had been the custom for companies and bands of pleasure-makers to go through the city rejoicing and making merry, so now again they assembled and met in divers parts of the city; and one district vied with the other which could invent and do the best. Among others, as of old was the custom, they of Borgo San Friano were wont to devise the newest and most varied pastimes; and they sent forth a proclamation that whosoever desired news of the other world should come on the 1st day of May upon the Carraia Bridge, and beside the Arno; and they erected upon the Arno a stage upon boats and vessels, and thereupon they made the similitude and figure of hell, with fires and other pains and sufferings, with men disguised as demons, horrible to behold, and others which had the appearance of



naked souls, which seemed to be persons, and they were putting them to the said divers torments, with loud cries, and shrieks, and tumult, which seemed hateful and fearful to hear and to see; and by reason of this new pastime there came many citizens to look on, and the Carraia Bridge, which then was of wood from pile to pile, was so burdened with people that it gave way in many places, and fell with the people which were upon it, wherefore many were killed and drowned, and many were maimed; so that the pastime from sport became earnest, and, as the proclamation had said, many by death went to learn news of the other world, with great lamentation and sorrow to all the city, for each one believed he must have lost his son or his brother there.—GIOVANNI VILLANI, *Chronicle*, Book VIII., § 70.

#### 24. REGISTER FOR PRESTANZA (NATIONAL DEBT), 1325.

In the name of God, Amen. Herein is inscribed all the money which I, Tano di Lapo della Bruna, have received for Gherardo Lanfredini, Camarlingo (treasurer) of the Commune of Florence, towards the impost of 50,000 gold florins levied by the Commune, which has been collected by the four companies Peruzzi, Bardi, Seali, and Aeeiajuoli. The said money is to be paid as a loan to the said Commune to pay to our Lord the Duke of Calabria 33,000 gold florins, a third of which was assigned to the Bardi on the Feast of S. Piero Scheraggio, March 25, 1325.—EDGCUMBE STALEY: *Guilds of Florence*, p. 190, quoted from *Archives of Florence*.

#### 25. FLORENTINE TRAVELLERS TO THE EAST.

(A.)

In the name of the Lord, Amen! This book is called *The Book of Descriptions of Countries*,<sup>1</sup> and of measures

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Goro Dati, *Istoria di Firenze*, iv. 56. "The Florentines were well acquainted with all the holes and corners of the known world."

employed in business, and of other things needful to be known by merchants of different parts of the world, and by all who have to do with merchandise and exchanges; showing also what relation the merchandise of one country or of one city bears to that of others, and how one kind of goods is better than another kind, and where the various wares come from, and how they may be kept as long as possible.—*The Book of the Descriptions of Countries*, by Francesco Balducci Pegolotti, agent of the Bardi Company of Florence in London (1317), Antwerp and Cyprus. Printed in Colonel Sir Henry Yule's *Cathay and the Way Thither*, Hakluyt Society, revised edition, 1913-16, Vol. III., p. 143.

(B) *Pegolotti's Advice to Merchants.*

Honesty is always best,  
 And to look before ye leap:  
 Do ever what thou promisest,  
 And, hard though it may be, still keep  
 Fair chastity. Let reason tell  
 Cheap to buy and dear to sell,  
 But have a civil tongue as well.  
 Frequent the Church's rites, and spare  
 To Him who sends thy gains a share.  
 So shalt thou prosper, standing by one price,  
 And shunning pest-like usury and dice.  
 Take aye good heed to govern well thy pen,  
 And blunder not in black and white! Amen.

*Ibid.*, p. 146.

(C) *Information regarding the Journey to Cathay.*

In the first place, from Tana (Azov) to Gintarchan (Astrakhan) may be twenty-five days with an ox-waggon, and from ten to twelve days with a horse-waggon. . . . And from Gittarchan (*i.e.*, Gintarchan or Astrakhan) to

Sara may be a day by river, and from Sara to Saracanco, also by river, eight days. . . .

From Saracanco (Sarachik) to Organci (Urghanj) may be twenty days' journey in camel-waggon. . . . From Organci to Oltrarre (Otrár in Turkestan) is thirty-five to forty days in camel-waggon. But if when you leave Saracanco you go direct to Oltrarre, it is a journey of fifty days only, and if you have no merchandise, it will be better to go this way than to go by Organci. From Oltrarre to Armalec (perhaps Old Kulja) is forty-five days' journey with pack asses . . . and from Armalec to Camexu is seventy days with asses. . . . —*Ibid.*, pp. 146-148.

(D) *Directions to Travellers.*

In the first place, you must let your beard grow long and not shave. And at Tana you should furnish yourself with a dragoman, and you must not try to save money in the matter of dragomen by taking a bad one instead of a good one; for the additional wages of the good one will not cost you so much as you will save by having him. . . .

The road you travel from Tana to Cathay is perfectly safe, whether by day or by night, according to what the merchants say who have used it. Only if the merchant, in going or coming, should die upon the road, everything belonging to him will become the perquisite of the lord of the country in which he dies, and the officers of the lord will take possession of all. And in like manner if he die in Cathay. But if his brother be with him, or an intimate friend and comrade calling himself his brother, then to such an one they will surrender the property of the deceased, and so it will be rescued. . . . And you may reckon that you can buy for one *sommo* of silver (five golden florins—*i.e.*, £2 7s. 6d.) nineteen or twenty pounds of Cathay silk. . . . You may reckon, also, that in Cathay you should get three or three and a half pieces of damasked



silk for a *sommo*, and from three and a half to five pieces of *nacchetti* (cloth) of silk and gold likewise for a *sommo* of silver.—*Ibid.*, pp. 152-155.

(E) *Advice as to selling Goods at Constantinople.*

And don't forget that if you treat the custom-house officers with respect, and make them something of a present in goods or money, as well as their clerks and dragomen, they will behave with great civility, and always be ready to appraise your wares below their real value.—*Ibid.*, p. 169.

(F) *Recollections of Travel in the East by John de' Marignolli.*

I, Friar John of Florence, of the Order of Minors, . . . was sent with certain others, in the year of our Lord 133[8], by the holy Pope Benedict XI., to carry letters and presents from the Apostolic See to the Kaan or chief Emperor of all the Tartars, a sovereign who holds the sway of nearly half the Eastern world, and whose power and wealth, with the multitude of cities and provinces and languages under him, and the countless number, I may say, of the nations over which he rules, pass all telling. . . . (Description of journey from Avignon to Naples and Constantinople.) Thence we sailed across the Black Sea, and in eight days arrived at Caffa, where there are Christians of many sects. From that place we went on to the first Emperor of the Tartars, Usbec, and laid before him the letters which we bore, with certain pieces of cloth, a great war-horse, some strong liquor, and the Pope's presents. And after the winter was over, having been well fed, well clothed, loaded with handsome presents, and supplied by the king with horses and travelling expenses, we proceeded to Armalec [the capital] of the Middle Empire (*i.e.*, Almaliq, capital of the Khans of Turkestan).—*Ibid.*, pp. 211-212.

## 26. THE POPULATION OF FLORENCE ABOUT A.D. 1336.

It was estimated that there were in Florence 90,000 mouths—men, women, and children—according to the notification of the amount of bread needed continually in the city. It was reckoned that there were there 15,000 men—foreigners, travellers or soldiers—not counting in the number of the citizens the monks, friars, and nuns. There were in the surrounding district of Florence 80,000 men. We find from the record of the parish priest who baptized the children (for each boy who was baptized at San Giovanni they dropped a black bean and for each girl a white bean, so as to count the number) that there were baptized in the year from 5,500 to 6,000, the males exceeding the females by 300 to 500 a year. There were of boys and girls who learned to read from 8,000 to 10,000; of boys who learned counting and arithmetic in six schools there were from 1,000 to 1,200; and of those who went to learn grammar and logic in four large schools from 550 to 600. The churches which were then in Florence and its suburbs, counting the monasteries and churches of the friars, were in number 110. Of these 57 were parish churches, 5 monasteries with 2 priors and 80 monks, 24 convents of nuns with 500 women, 10 orders of friars, 30 hospitals with more than 1,000 beds to divide among the poor and sick, and from 250 to 300 chaplains. The workshops of the Guild of Wool were 200 and more, where they made from 70,000 to 80,000 pieces of cloth, which was worth 1,200,000 gold florins. Of this fully a third was kept on the spot for works, without counting the earnings of the wool-dressers in these works, which supplied a living to more than 30,000 persons. . . . The factories of the Calimala Guild of French and other foreign cloth were 20 in number, to which were sent in each year more than 10,000 pieces of cloth of the value of 300,000 gold

florins, all sold in Florence, not including those sent out of Florence. The banks of money-changers were 80 in number. Of gold coins they struck from 350,000 florins, and sometimes 400,000, and of pence of four farthings to one penny they struck in the year about 20,000 pounds weight. The college of judges numbered 80, the notaries 600, doctors (physicians and surgeons), 60. Of apothecaries' shops there were about 100; of merchants and haberdashers there were a large number; the number of shoemakers', slipper-makers', and patten-makers' shops could not be estimated. There were over 300 whose business was with people outside Florence, and there were many other master-craftsmen and stonemasons and carpenters. They had 146 bakehouses, and we can tell from the tax on millers and bakers that every day there was needed within the city 140 *moggia* of grain.<sup>1</sup> Thus we can tell how much was needed in the year, not counting that the greater part of the rich and noble and well-off citizens lived with their families in the country outside Florence four months in the year and sometimes longer.—GIOVANNI VILLANI: *Chronicle*, Book XI., § 93.

## 27. THE CONDITION OF FLORENCE ABOUT A.D. 1338.

We find by the taxes paid at the gates that there entered into Florence every year about 55,000 *cogna* of wine [550,000 barrels], and in good years about 10,000 *cogna* more. They required in the city, in the year, about 4,000 oxen and calves, 70,000 sheep, 20,000 goats, 30,000 pigs. There came in by the San Friano gate in July 4,000 loads of melons, all of which were distributed about the city.

At this time they had in Florence the following foreign officials, each administering the law and with the power of applying the torture: the Podestà; the captain and

<sup>1</sup> A *moggia* is equivalent to 860 lbs.

defender of the people and the guilds; the administrator of the ordinances of justice; the captain of the guard or protector of the people (he had more power than the others)—these four had the power of punishing in person the judge of causes and appeals; the official of the taxes; the official for the ornaments of women; the official for trade; the official of the Guild of Wool; the ecclesiastical officials; the court of the Bishop of Florence; the court of the Bishop of Fiesole; the inquisitor into heretical pravity. The other dignities and magnificences of our city of Florence I do not forget, so that information may be given to those who come after us. It was well provided with many fair dwellings within the city, and in these times the work of building continued so that they became more commodious and well furnished, fine examples of all manner of improvements being brought from abroad. There were cathedral churches and churches for the friars of all orders, and magnificent monasteries, and outside the city there were no burghers or nobles who had not built, or were not building, great and rich houses with splendid outbuildings, much better than in the city. And in this they were wrong, and for their reckless expenditure they were deemed madmen.—GIOVANNI VILLANI: *Chronicle*, Book XI., § 93.

## 28. SUMPTUARY LAWS.

Not a long time ago when I, the writer, although unworthy, was one of the Priori of our city, there came as judge one whose name was Messer Amerigo degli Amerighi, of Pesaro, a man most beautiful in his person and very able in his business, and presenting himself at the place of our office upon his arrival, with all due solemnity and speeches, he entered into office. Now new laws<sup>1</sup> on the ornaments

<sup>1</sup> Among these sumptuary laws were the following: "No woman of any condition whatever may dare or presume in any way in the city suburbs or district of Florence to wear pearls, mother-of-pearl,

of the women having been passed, he was sent for some days after this, and bidden to carry out these orders. . . . It happened by chance that certain citizens, seeing how the women wore whatever they liked without any hindrance, and hearing of the law that had been passed, and also that the new officer had arrived, went some of them to the Signori and said that the new officer did his work so well that never before had the women had so much liberty in their dress as at the present time.

Wherefore the Signori sent for the judge and told him how they marvelled at the negligent manner in which he carried out the orders concerning the women. Messer Amerigo made answer as follows: "My lords, I have studied all my life to learn law, and now, when I thought that I knew something, I find that I know nothing; for when seeking for those ornaments which are forbidden to your women, according to the orders which you gave me, such arguments as they brought forward in their defence I never before found in any law, and from among them I should like to mention to you a few. There cometh a woman with the long peak of her hood fringed and twisted round her head. My notary saith: 'Tell me your name, because your peak is fringed.' The good woman taketh down the peak, which is fastened to the hood with a pin, and holding it in her hand, she telleth the notary that it is only a wreath. Then he goeth farther, and meeteth a woman wearing many buttons in front of her

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or precious stones, on the head or shoulders, or on any other part of the person, or on any dress which may be worn on the person.

*Item.*—She may not dare or presume to wear any brocade of gold or silver, or stuff gilt or silvered, embroidered or trimmed with ribbons, neither on her shoulders, nor on her head, nor on any garment as described above." (Mrs. Oliphant, *Makers of Florence*, p. 184.)

The Podestà and Gonfaloniere di Giustizia wore scarlet and gold, with fur linings, and pearls were reserved for their use. The consuls wore uncut diamonds and sapphires.



dress. He saith to her: 'Ye cannot wear those buttons,' and she answereth: 'Yes, messere, I can; for these are not buttons—they are beads, and if ye do not believe me look at them: they have no hanks, neither have they any button-holes.' The notary goeth to another who is wearing ermine, and wondereth, 'What will she have to say?' 'Ye are wearing ermine,' he saith, and is about to write down her name, but the woman answereth: 'Do not put down my name; for this is not ermine—this is the fur of a suckling.' The notary asketh: 'What is this suckling?' and the woman answereth: 'It is an animal'; and my notary is stuck like an animal!"

Said one of the Signori: "We do but knock our heads against a wall."

Another said: "We had best attend to business of greater import."

And a third said: "Let him who liketh it see to this trouble!"—SACCHETTI: *Novelle*, 137, tr. M. G. Steegmann.

## 29. ENGLAND AND FLORENTINE BANKERS.

At the period of the aforesaid war between the Kings of France and England, the companies of the Bardi and Peruzzi of Florence were the King of England's merchants. All his revenues and wools came into their hands, and they furnished from them all his expenses. But his expenses so much exceeded the revenues that the King of England, when he returned home from the war, found himself indebted for principal, assignments, and rewards to the Bardi more than 180,000 marks [ $4\frac{1}{2}$  gold florins = 1 mark] sterling, and to the Peruzzi more than 135,000 marks, the total being more than 1,365,000 gold florins, the worth of a kingdom. Of these sums a considerable portion consisted in assignments which the King had made to them in times past, but they were rash enough—whether from

covetousness of gain, or led on by the hope of recovering the entire debt—to give them up, and entrust all their own property and that of others in their keeping to this one Prince (Edward III.). And observe that a large part of the money they had lent was not their own capital, but had been borrowed by them or received on trust from fellow-citizens and strangers. And great danger thence befell both them and the city of Florence, as you will shortly learn. For not being able to answer the calls of their creditors in England, Florence, and other places where they trafficked, they lost their credit on all sides and became bankrupt, and especially the Peruzzi. Yet they avoided complete ruin by their possessions in the city and territory of Florence and by the great power and rank which they held in the republic. This failure and the great expenses of the State in Lombardy greatly reduced the wealth and condition of the merchants and traders of Florence and of the whole community. . . . For when the aforesaid companies had failed—which were two mainstays of trade, and through their influence in the days of their prosperity supported by their dealings a great part of the commerce and traffic of Christendom, and were in a manner the nourishment of all the world—every other merchant was suspected and mistrusted. Our city of Florence in consequence sustained a loss such as had not been experienced for many years. And, moreover, owing to the aforesaid causes and to the large sums that the Commune had exacted from the citizens by way of loan, and owing to the expenses of the undertakings in Lombardy and in Lucca, the failure of credit shortly afterwards brought about the fall of the smaller companies, as we shall mention hereafter. — GIOVANNI VILLANI : *Chronicle*, Book XI., § 88.

## 30. THE POWER OF THE GUILDS, A.D. 1343

So the city of Florence had rest from so much uproar and danger, and the people having brought all their strength against the nobles and overcome all their forces and resistance in every part of the city, advanced to great state and boldness and power, specially the Mediani (the minor trade guilds) and the smaller artizans, who allotted what remained of the government posts in the city to the twenty-one heads of the guilds. And to make a reformation anew of the nine priors, of the twelve, the councils, the gonfalonier (standard-bearer) of the companies, the priors and the twelve, with the help of the ambassadors of Siena and Perugia and the Count Simone, so that the election might be more general, gave judgment in the following terms, and great concord followed, and the priors made a new scrutiny, which created nine priors, twelve counsellors, sixteen gonfaloniers of companies, five gonfaloniers of merchants, fifty-two men from the twenty-one heads of the guilds, and twenty-eight distributed by quarters, all of them from the artificers, so that there were in all two hundred and six putting into the ballot-box the name of every good man of the people worthy of being an official.—GIOVANNI VILLANI : *Chronicle*, Book XII., § 22.

## 31. CONCESSION TO THE NOBLES.

For the well-being and peace of the people and Commune, and to satisfy those nobles who wished to live well, they brought before the people two petitions :

1. That the chapters of the Ordinances of Justice in which there was excessive harshness (namely, that the innocent nobles who were related to evil-doers were condemned to bear the penalty of the latter's ill-doing) should be corrected.



2. That certain families of nobles who now possessed little wealth and were not evil-doers should be allowed to become "popolani."

These petitions were granted in part. . . . And now we are under the rule of the artizans and of the Lesser Guilds (*popolo minuto*) God grant that it may bring benefit and health to our republic !—GIOVANNI VILLANI : *Chronicle*, Book XII., § 23.

### 32. THE PLAGUE, A.D. 1348.

The yeare of our blessed Saviour's incarnation, that memorable mortality happened in the excellent City, farre beyond all the rest in Italy ; which plague, by operation of the superiour bodies, or rather for our enormous iniquities, by the just anger of God, was sent upon us mortals. Some few yeeres before, it tooke beginning in the Easterne partes, sweeping thence an innumerable quantity of living soules, extending itself afterward from place to place Westward until it seized on the said City. Where neither humane skill or providence could use any prevention, notwithstanding it was cleansed of many annoyances by diligent Officers thereto deputed. . . . And this pestilence was yet of farre greater power or violence ; for not onely healthfull persons speaking to the sicke, comming to see them, or ayiring cloathes in kindnesse to comfort them, was an occasion of ensuing death, but touching their garments, or any foode whereon the sicke person fed, or anything else used in his service, seemed to transferre the disease from the sicke to the sound in very rare and miraculous manner. . . . One citizen fled after another, and one neighbour had not any care of another, parents nor kindred never visiting them, but utterly they were forsaken on all sides. . . . Such was the pittifull misery of poore people, and divers who were of better condition, as it was most lamentable to

behold ; because the greater number of them, under hope of healing, or compelled by poverty, kept still within their house, weak and faint, thousands<sup>1</sup> falling sick daily, and having no helpe of being succoured any way with food or physicke, all of them died, few or none escaping. — BOCCACCIO : *Decameron*, Introduction (English translation, 1620.)

### 33. THE WHITE COMPANY OF CONDOTTIERI, A.D. 1360.

In the peace made by the two Kings of France and England . . : the King of England having returned with his sons and the host to their island, many English knights and archers who had become used to plunder and robbery remained in the country, and having ordered Messer Beltramo di Crechi and the arch-priest of Pelagorga to form a company, they gathered together every kind of person who was disposed to evil. There were Frenchmen, Germans, Englishmen, Gascons, Burgundians, Normans, Provençals. In a short time they increased to a great number, and called themselves the "White Company." They began to disturb the country and to exact money and clothes from the people in all parts, and they remained till the peace was settled and the King of France released from prison. Then by the orders of the said kings, on pain of death and the taking of their goods, and pursued by their lords, they left the realm of France and assembled at Langres in the Empire, and there were in number 6,000 armed men.—MATTEO VILLANI : *Chronicle*, Book IX., § 109.

### 34. POPE URBAN V.'S VIEW OF THE CONDOTTIERI, 1364.

He gave ecclesiastical subsidies to princes and indulgences to the people who would take arms against "that multitude

<sup>1</sup> Three-fifths of the population died.

of villains of divers nations associated in arms by avidity in appropriating to themselves the fruit of the labours of innocent and defenceless people ; unbridled in every kind of cruelty ; extorting money, methodically devastating the country and the open towns, burning houses and barns, destroying trees and vines, obliging poor peasants to fly ; assaulting, besieging, invading, spoiling, and ruining even fortresses and walled cities ; torturing and maiming those from whom they expected to receive ransom, without regard to ecclesiastical dignity, or sex, or age ; violating wives, virgins, and nuns, and constraining even gentlewomen to follow their camp, to do their pleasure, and carry arms and baggage."—Brief of Pope Urban V., February 17, 1364, quoted in *Sir John Hawkwood* by Temple Leader and Marcotti, pp. 50-51:

### 35. SIR JOHN HAWKWOOD AND THE FRIARS.

This was the merry answer which Messer Giovanni Augut<sup>1</sup> gave to two minor friars who, going to him on some business at one of his castles where he happened to be, and coming into his presence, said, as was their custom : "God give you peace, my lord." To which he replied instantly : "May God take away your alms." The friars in alarm said : "Signor, why do you speak so to us ?" Hawkwood replied : "Why did you then speak so to me ?" The friars replied : "We thought to be kind." And Hawkwood said : "How could you mean to be kind when you come to me and say : 'May God make you die of hunger' ? Do you not know that I live by war, and that peace would be my undoing, and that as I live by war so you live by alms, and that the answer I made to you was the same as your salutation ?"

The friars shrugged their shoulders and said : "You are

<sup>1</sup> Sir John Hawkwood, the famous English soldier of fortune, whose name was spelt Aguto, Aucud, Haccoude, etc.

right; forgive us. We are stupid men." . . . And certainly it is true that this man fought in Italy longer than any other man ever did—he fought sixty years, and nearly every part became his tributary. So well did he manage his affairs that there was little peace in Italy in his days. And woe to those men and peoples who believe too much in his kind, because peoples and cities live and grow by peace, and these men live and grow by war. — SACCHETTI: *Novelle*, 181.

### 36. THE RULER'S VIEW OF A CONDOTTIERO.

The Council of the Podestà and Commune of Florence in 1393 carried the following: "The magnificent and potent lords, the Signori Priors of the Arts and Gonfaloniere of Justice of the people and Commune of Florence, being desirous that the magnificent and faithful achievements of the here-written Sir John, his fidelity to the honour and grandeur of the Florentine Republic, should not only be rewarded by remuneration during his life, as was done in his pension, but perpetually shown to his glory after death; and above all that brave men may know that the Commune of Florence recompenses true service with her recognition and beneficent gratitude . . . deliberate that the members of the Opera (Board of Works) of Santa Reparata (*i.e.*, the greatest of the Florentine churches), or even two parts of them if the other should be absent, or not forthcoming, or dissentient, or unwilling, shall as soon as possible, beginning at the coming year, cause to be constructed and made in the said church, and in a conspicuous place, high and honourable, as shall appear best to them, a worthy and handsome tomb for the ashes of the great and brave knight Sir John Hawkwood, English Captain-General of war to the said Commune, and who has more than once in the wars of the said Commune been

Captain-General. And the said sepulchre, in which the body of the said Sir John and no other body may be placed, shall be adorned with such stone and marble figures and armorial ensigns as shall seem convenient, either to the magnificence of the Commune of Florence or to the honour and lasting fame of the said Sir John. And they may and ought to spend . . . as much, how and whensoever they will."

—*Sir John Hawkwood*, by Temple Leader and Marcotti, p. 276.

### 37. FLORENCE AND THE PAPAL INTERDICT, 1376.

To answer the protests and admonitions of the Pope in those things which were concerned with the care of souls, the Signoria sent (in 1376) to Avignon Alessandro dell' Antella and Donato Barbadori, the one an excellent Doctor of Law and the other of Canon Law, and with them Domenico Salvestro, a sagacious lawyer and a man of great experience. . . . They argued that it was the pride, avarice, dishonesty, and terrible cruelty which the ecclesiastical ministers of the States of the Church had practised, and not the compulsion of the Florentines, which had forced their injured and suffering subjects to take up arms. The Papal agents had introduced the insolence of the French into Italy instead of seeking to render themselves attractive to their unhappy people; they had put all their trust in fortresses, prisons, citadels, and such-like places, more suitable to tyrants and lay rulers than to the mildness of ecclesiastics, from whom the inhabitants are wont to expect benefits and services and not harshness and rigour. . . . They showed, on the other hand, how the Florentine Republic had always been devoted to the Apostolic See—that when the Church was at war, the Florentines were always to be found armed in its defence. . . .

The honours and the gifts given to the (Papal) legates



who were sent to the city of Florence were innumerable and of infinite value: Of Florentine piety the clear and certain proofs were the magnificent churches, the many rich hospitals, the venerable convents for women and men, the confraternities of laymen, the almsgiving so great that the poor who were driven away from every other city in Italy found their sole refuge in the city of Florence. In this they could never change, but the wicked behaviour of the ministers of His Holiness and the Church of God had been the cause of all the evil that had happened. No words, though spoken not once but many times by the ambassadors, had any effect in appeasing the Pontiff, who blamed not so much the city of Florence as the madness of the governors, who could not be suffered to remain unpunished for so much boldness. Therefore, on the first day of April, in full consistory, the ambassadors of the Republic being present, he fulminated the sentence of excommunication against the Florentines, condemning their souls, for disobedience, to the pains of hell, confiscating their goods, and declaring that anyone might capture, sell, or kill them, or do anything else to them, as if they were infidels or slaves, without any remorse of conscience.

Barbadori, a man of deep feeling and love for his republic, moved by passion on hearing these words, threw himself on his knees, with head uncovered, before a crucifix which was painted there, and cried: "To Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, I appeal from the unjust sentence of thy Vicar. I appeal to that dread day when Thou shalt come to judge the world without respect of persons. Till then be Thou our just and incorruptible Judge, the defender of our republic against the cruel blasphemies thundered against it, with what justice Thou knowest." He ended with the words of the Psalmist: "Have regard for me, O God; be Thou my health and my strength. Leave me not nor forsake me when my father and my mother forsake me."

. . . When the ambassadors returned to Florence on October 4 (1377), and reported what the decision of the Pope had been, the citizens were very indignant, and not without having first taken counsel of the doctors of canon law, if they deserve to be so termed, they decided not in future to obey these interdicts. Therefore on October 22, when for about seventeen months no holy offices had been performed in the city, an order was given that in the city, the surrounding country, and the dominion of Florence, all priests, friars, and monks should open their churches and celebrate Mass and the offices of the Church as they did formerly; should sound the bells, administer the holy sacraments, go to the dead, and perform all other functions of the Church; that prelates who were absent from their churches and who would not return should be fined 10,000 lire, and ordinary priests should pay 1,000 from their private possessions; that in future no one should be absent from his church without permission from the gonfalonier and his colleagues under penalty of 500 lire.—AMMIRATO: *Istorie Fiorentine*, Book XIII.

### 38 (a). SLAVERY IN FLORENCE.

On May 7, 1376, I bought a slave for thirty-five florins from Bartolommeo of Venice, named Tiratea, or Dorothea, a Tartar from Russia. She was about eighteen years of age, and Creci, the broker, only put twenty-five florins into the bill of sale on account of the duty. With brokerage and duty she cost me one florin, and four florins for clothes, as she was almost naked when I bought her. I sold her in September, 1379, for thirty-six florins. — *Memoriale del Baldovinetti*, quoted by Mrs. Janet Ross in *Letters of the Early Medici*, p. 30.



## 38 (b). THE MORALS OF SLAVERY.

May a slave being born a Pagan, who becomes a Christian, be sold? I say Yes. None may be free who do not believe that Christ will come again. Even though I buy a slave who is then baptized, he or she is baptized as a servant and a subject, and is like unto one in prison who cannot give a bond or go bail, and most of them go to baptism like oxen. Baptism does not make them Christians, and no one is obliged to set them free, even if they be Christians, unless they wish.—SACCHETTI: *Sermoni Evangelici*, quoted by Mrs. Janet Ross in *Letters of the Early Medici*, p. 29.

## 39. THE CIOMPI RISING, A.D. 1378.

Salvestro [de' Medici], therefore, to carry out his intention, departed from the chamber alone, no one knowing where he meant to go. He went to the hall of the council, where all the council was already assembled, and began to speak in these words: "Wise councillors, I have tried this day to purge this city of the pestilent tyrannies of the great and powerful, and I have not been allowed to do it, for my companions and colleagues will not permit it. It would have been for the welfare of the citizens and of the whole city. But I have not been believed, nor listened to as the gonfalonier of justice should have been. And so, as I cannot do good, I have decided to be no longer prior nor gonfalonier, and therefore I mean to go to my own house. Make another gonfalonier in my place." With this he turned to leave the hall. At these words all the assembly jumped up and an uproar burst forth, and seeing that the gonfalonier was going down the staircase they prevented him and would not let him go. When he was brought back to the hall the tumult became fierce. And a shoe-

maker named Benedetto di Carlone took Carlo degli Strozzi by the collar, crying: "Carlo, Carlo, things shall go differently from what you think. Your majorities shall be done away with."

But Carlo, like a wise man, answered nothing. Benedetto di Nerozzo degli Alberti, who was on the council, sprang to one of the windows of the hall and began to shout: "Hurrah for the people!" and those who were in the piazza shouted: "Hurrah for the people!" At once the news went all over the city, and the shops were shut. The uproar was quieted for a time. Nevertheless the people began to take up arms. . . .

On the Sunday all the guilds assembled in their shops (and every artizan went to his workshop, too), and they appointed Syndics—one for each guild. On the Monday these went to the Palazzo Publico to the priors and they discussed matters, but could come to no agreement. On Tuesday the guilds began to arm, as had been ordered, and they marched out with their standards. Word was brought to the priors and the Signoria, and they rang the great bell to call a meeting. . . . But as the news was spreading the standards of the guilds reached the piazza with the shout: "Hurrah for the people!" . . . The Signori wandered one hither and one thither, one up and one down, and did not know what to do. The gonfalonier, like a worthless poor creature as he was, slunk away from his colleagues secretly, and went to Messer Tommaso Strozzi and implored him to save him. And Messer Tommaso took him away from the palace to his own house . . . and the two priors coming out from their rooms saw no one of their colleagues, and on asking were told that they had all gone to their homes.

Then they gave up all for lost; and seeing that in fact all the others had gone away to their own houses, they went down the stairs and gave up the keys of the palace gates to the provost of the guilds—his name was

Calcagnino, a tavern-keeper—and went both of them to their own homes. . . . And thus was destroyed, as one may say, the happy, prosperous, and tranquil government of the city of Florence. As soon as the Signori were gone the gates of the palace were thrown open and the populace rushed in, and one called Michele di Lando, a wool-comber, or a foreman in a shop of wool-combers and carders, had in his hand a gonfalon, which the people had taken from the house of the Esecutore di Giustizia, and he was barelegged, in shoes, but without stockings. With this flag in his hand he entered the palace at the head of the populace and proceeded straight to the audience chamber of the Signory, and there he came to a standstill. And the populace by acclamation gave him the Signory and declared their will that he should be gonfalonier and lord of Florence.

And then he made certain decrees and published them to the people; he made Syndics of the guilds whomsoever he thought fit, and gave them the charge of restoring order in the city. And so things remained all that day and part of the next; so that it may be said that this Michele di Lando, the wool-comber, was for more than twenty-eight hours absolute lord of Florence. And this was the result of our civil contentions and changes. O merciful God, how wonderful and great a miracle hast Thou manifested to us!<sup>1</sup>—GINO CAPPONI (in *Cronichette Antiche*, Vol. 468 of *Biblioteca scelta di opere italiane*, p. 297 ff).

<sup>1</sup> Cf. MACHIAVELLI, *History of Florence*, Book III., c. 16: "After this he (Michele di Lando) assembled the Syndics of the Guilds and created a Signory, four members out of the inferior sort of people, two for the Greater and two for the Lesser Guilds. Moreover, he made a new scrutiny and divided the public offices into three parts, one of them to be concerned with the new Guilds, another with the Lesser, and the third with the Greater. He gave to Salvestro de' Medici the rents of the shops upon the Ponte Vecchio and reserved to himself the governorship of Empoli."

## 40. THE CHARACTER OF THE FLORENTINES.

As for natural abilities, I for my part cannot believe that anyone either could or ought to doubt that the Florentines, even if they do not excel all other nations, are at least inferior to none in those things to which they give their minds. In trade, whereon of a truth their city is founded, and wherein their industry is chiefly exercised, they ever have been and still are reckoned not less trusty and true than great and prudent; but besides trade it is clear that the three most noble arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture have reached that degree of supreme excellence in which we find them now chiefly by the toil and by the skill of the Florentines, who have beautified and adorned not only their own city, but also very many others, with great glory and no small profit to themselves and to their country. . . . I am wholly of opinion opposed to that of some who, because the Florentines are merchants, hold them for neither noble nor high-spirited but for tame and low-born fellows. On the contrary, I have often wondered with myself how it could be that men who have been used from their childhood upwards for a paltry profit to carry bales of wool and baskets of silk like porters, and to stand like slaves all day and great part of the night at the loom, could summon when and where was need such greatness of soul, such noble and lofty thoughts, that they have wit and heart to say and do those many glorious things we know of them.—VARCHI: *Storia Fiorentina*, Book IX., cc. 48, 49.

## 41. THE GOVERNMENT OF FLORENCE

It should also be known that all the Florentine burghers were obliged to rank in one of the twenty-one guilds—that is, no one could be a burgher of Florence unless he or his ancestors had been approved and enrolled in one of these guilds, whether they practised it or no.

Without the proof of such enrolment he could not be drawn for any office, or exercise any magistracy, or even have his name put into the bags. . . .

Each guild had, as may still be seen, a house or mansion, large and noble, where they appointed officers, and gave account of debit and credit to all the members of the guild.

In processions and other public assemblies the heads (for so the chiefs of the several guilds were called) had their place and precedence in order. Moreover, these guilds at first had each an ensign for the defence, on occasion, of liberty with arms. Their origin was when the people in 1282 overcame the nobles (*grandi*) and passed the Ordinances of Justice against them, whereby no nobleman could exercise any magistracy; so that such of the patricians as desired to be able to hold office had to enter the ranks of the people, as did many great houses of quality, and enrol themselves in one of the guilds. Which thing, while it partly allayed the civil strife of Florence, almost wholly extinguished all noble feeling in the souls of the Florentines; and the power and haughtiness of the city were no less abated than the insolence and pride of the nobles, who since then have never lifted up their heads again. These guilds, the greater as well as the lesser, have varied in numbers at different times, and often have not only been rivals, but even foes amongst themselves; so much so that the lesser guilds once got it passed that the gonfalonier should be appointed only from their body.

Yet after long dispute it was finally settled in 1383 that the gonfalonier could not be chosen from the lesser, but that he should always rank with the greater, and that in all other offices and magistracies the lesser should always have a fourth and no more. Consequently of the eight priors two were always of the lesser; and of the twelve, three; of the sixteen, four; and so on through all the magistracies.—VARCHI : *Storia Fiorentina*, Book III., cc. 20, 21.



## LIST OF EVENTS

NOTE.—It should be remembered that in mediæval Florence the year began on March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation.

- 1076–1115. Countess Matilda of Tuscany rules.
- 1177. First conflict between Grandi (nobles) and popolani (people). Società delle Torri (Societies of the Towers) and the Arti (Trade Guilds) already strong.
- 1207. Election of a Podestà.
- 1215. Murder of Bondelmonte de' Bondelmonti. Guelf and Ghibelline factions formed.
- 1245. Massacre of the Paterini (heretics).
- 1250. Il primo Popolo (popular Government formed).
- 1265. Dante Alighieri born.
- 1266. Trade Guilds reorganized.
- 1267. Establishment of Parte Guelfa.
- 1280. Election of first Signory.
- 1289. Abolition of serfdom.
- 1293. Ordinamenti della Giustizia (Justice).
- 1307. Executor of Justice appointed to enforce the Ordinances.
- 1312. Siege of Florence by Emperor Henry VII.
- 1323. Siege of Prato by Castruccio Castracane.
- 1328. Consiglio del Popolo and Consiglio del Comune formed.
- 1337. Death of Giotto.
- 1339. Losses of Bardi and Peruzzi firms through loans to King of England.
- 1340. Plague in Florence.



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1342. Duke of Athens appointed Captain of the Guard and Conservator of Peace.
1343. His expulsion. Defeat of "Grandi" by "popolani." Re-enactment of "Ordinances of Justice."
1348. The Black Death.
1358. System of "Admonitions" instituted.
1362. Sir John Hawkwood and the "White Company" fight for Pisa.
- 1375-8. War between Florence and the Church.
1378. Salvestro de' Medici elected gonfalonier. Rising of the Ciompi. Michele di Lando declared Signor of Florence.
1390. War between Florence and Milan.
1399. "The White Penitents" formed.
1402. Death of Gian Galeazzo Visconti, Duke of Milan.
1406. Capture of Pisa by Florence.

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TEXTS FOR STUDENTS. No. 20

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SELECT EXTRACTS  
ILLUSTRATING  
FLORENTINE LIFE IN THE  
FIFTEENTH CENTURY

BY  
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## INTRODUCTION

As the history of Florence in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is the story of the evolution of government based on commerce and industry, and of the guilds through which these were carried on, so the history of the succeeding century is that of a community through whose institutions life is ceasing to flow—the place once taken by institutions is now being taken by individuals. It is true that many of the artists and sculptors who flourished under Lorenzo de' Medici were trained in the workshops of members of the guilds, but later on Lorenzo found it necessary to establish a school of sculptors in the gardens of the Medici Palace. Long before that Dante and Petrarch, Boccaccio and Sacchetti, had made the name of Florence famous as the home of art and letters. To Florence came (in 1397) the first real teacher of Greek in Italy, Manuel Chrysoloras; he was followed by several of his compatriots, most of whom came to Italy between 1400 and the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Thus Greek learning spread widely. Florence had its famous Platonic Academy, founded by Cosimo de' Medici, who, it should be remembered, also founded the monastery of St. Mark's. The commerce of the city was international: its warehouses and banks were to be found in every Italian state, in France, Germany, England, Flanders, and the Levant; books and MSS. were carried from country to country along with the cloths and silks of Florence and the raw



materials, spices, drugs, and jewels of the East. It was the age of the universal in thought and life. Pico della Mirandola expressed it in religion when he said in his "Oration on the Dignity of Man": "Thou bearest in thee the germs of a universal life." It is this universality that is so marked in the genius of Leonardo da Vinci, Leone Battista Alberti, and others. Of their knowledge in all branches it is true to say that "which of them soever he had considered, in him ye would have thought that he had taken that one for his only study."

Merchants and craftsmen were scholars and poets too. The women there, as elsewhere in Italy, were renowned for their learning and accomplishments: Alessandra Scala, the daughter of the Secretary of the Florentine Republic, was distinguished not only for her beauty, but even more for her attainments. At an early age she wrote not only Latin, but Greek also, and some of her Greek poems appeared in Poliziano's works.

Cassandra Fideles, a correspondent of Lorenzo's, was reputed to be among the first scholars of the age.

Lucrezia de' Medici was a writer of "lauds, sonnets, and poems in *terza rima*." The family of the Medici grew famous as the bankers of kings and Popes as well as of the Florentine merchants; their representatives were known in every Court, and were treated with the honour paid to ambassadors. Cosimo himself was sent by his father in the train of the Pope John XXII. as the bank's representative at the Council of Constance (1414).

Lorenzo, when going to study the political conditions of Milan, Venice, etc., at the age of seventeen, was told by Cosimo: "Thou art to follow the advice of Pigello (manager of the Medici Bank at Milan) and his written instructions." Lorenzo, as one of the partners of the bank, lent 100,000 ducats to the Pope, and the Duke of Ferrara guaranteed repayment of a loan from the bank on the salt mines of Modena. The Medici of the fifteenth century were not

princes; Lorenzo held no public office, he only "took charge of the city and of the State as his grandfather and father had done." When, after his death, and the expulsion of his son Picro, Savonarola established a theocracy in Florence, he who had protested against the "tyrant" himself "took charge of the city" in precisely the same way. There was much that was wrong in the life of Florence—the lust of territory, the indifference to the horrors of war, cruelty, slavery, violence, and the like; and these things led to the downfall of the city. But in spite of all there was beauty in art and life, truth and simplicity in religion. She counted among her citizens incomparable artists, sculptors, writers, thinkers, and teachers, and to their life and work we still look back with amazement and delight.

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E. G. ROPER.



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# SELECT EXTRACTS ILLUSTRATING FLORENTINE LIFE IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

## 1. COUNTRY LIFE *cir.* A.D. 1400.

[*Del Governo della Famiglia*, by AGNOLO PANDOLFINI (?), quoted by Mrs. Oliphant in *Makers of Florence*, ed. 1883, p. 167.]

Here he had a most worthy house, full of everything necessary to the condition of a man of gentle blood—dogs hawks, and every kind of nets both for fishing and birding. In this house all guests were received honourably. He was very liberal, and there being no other house near Florence of such quality and so well regulated, all the great personages who came were lodged there. There he received Pope Eugenius, King Rinieri, Duke Francesco, often the Marchese Niccolo, and many other great people; and the house was always so well provided that nothing was wanting. When it happened that on a *festa* or other day his children came from Florence to visit him without bringing other guests, he complained and reproved them. The house was a habitation of well-doing; and Agnolo was in his time another Lucullus, having his dwelling furnished with every kind of poultry and provision for guests, to do honour to those who came. When it happened that there were no visitors in the house after a great hawking he sent to the road to see if anyone passed that way, and gave orders to bring in all wayfarers to dinner. When they reached the house, water was given them to wash their hands, and dinner was served; after which, when they had eaten, he thanked them, and said that they were free to go—that he did not wish to hinder their journey.



2. ENTRANCE OF THE POPE (MARTIN V.) INTO FLORENCE,  
WHERE HE WAS RECEIVED BY THE GONFALONIERE  
AND A PROCESSION OF CITIZENS, 1418.

"Istorie di Giovanni Cambi," in *Delizie degli Eruditi Toscani*, vol. ii.,  
p. 140. Florence, 1785.]

And there were the magnificent Signoria with their colleges and all the magistrates of Florence and the six councilors of the merchants and the Consuls of all the Guilds and all the noble citizens of Florence, all clothed in the best that they had, a magnificent sight to see, with garlands of olive on their heads and with a standard of cloth of gold lined with sable . . . then came a hundred young men dressed in cloth, each carrying a wax candle, ten pounds in weight, in his hand ; next came the Cardinals, and after them a mule with a beautifully ornamented casket on its back, and inside the casket the *Corpus Domini*. Then followed the Pope under a standard of brocade borne by the colleges . . . and as they entered the city they found the whole gate was opened and the portcullis was entirely taken away—a thing that had never been the custom to do for holy Popes or Emperors, and without any noise but with much devotion the procession passed straight through the Borgo San Lorenzo, and the Pope dismounted at the Cathedral at a platform covered with carpet, at the foot of the steps.

From there he went on foot, upon white woollen cloth, right up to the high altar ; and having there made the proper reverences and ceremonies he remounted his horse and passing by the street of the Balestrieri . . . and the Piazza of the Signoria, and the Porta Santa Maria, and the Borgo Sant' Apostoli, and the houses of the Spini, and the Tornaquinci, dismounted at Santa Maria Novella, accompanied by those mentioned above. Behind him was a bishop, who kept throwing round as he went a number of small coins for the sake of appearing grand, also to prevent the people from crowding so much ; the Pope got off his horse and went to rest, for he was very tired.

And the Pope's mace-bearers took possession of the standards of the captain of the Guelf party and the canopy which the Signoria had held over the Pope, and over the *Corpus Domini*.

And the rulers decided that the Cathedral funds should pay one thousand five hundred golden florins to the friars of Santa Maria Novella, to prepare an apartment fit to receive such a Pope. And so there was built in the second cloister a large hall with other living-rooms and they put the arms of the city over them and those of the Woollen Workers' Guild below, as may be seen to this day [1511]. And to all the Cardinals our magnificent Signoria made a present, confectionery, wine, wax, meal, and game to the value of fifty golden florins for each one of them, as has been said, and there were nineteen Cardinals that day round the Pope at the high altar of Santa Maria Novella.

### 3. GIOVANNI DE' MEDICI AND THE CATASTO (TAX), 1427.

[MACHIAVELLI: *History of Florence*, Book IV., "Everyman" edition, pp. 150, 151.]

Messer Rinaldo degli Albizzi addressed the meeting. He described the condition of affairs, how by their own negligence the city had drifted into the hands of the plebeians, and how it had before been recovered by their fathers in 1381. He recalled to their memory that iniquitous government which had ruled from 1377 to 1381; all those who were present had fathers or grandfathers who had suffered death under it, and the same perils would recur if such a government were to return to power. Already the mob had imposed such taxes as best suited it, and soon would be creating magistrates in its own interests, if it were not stopped by force or law. When this should happen the mob would take their place, and the government which for forty-two years had ruled the city with so much glory would be destroyed. Then Florence would either be governed by the will of a licentious mob or

another danger would arise—a government under the dominion of one man, who would be made a prince over them. Therefore he declared that every man who loved his country and his own honour was bound to rise; he recalled to their memory the valour of Bardo Mancini, who rescued the city from its dangers by the destruction of the Alberti. The perils which were now imminent were caused by the wide franchises, which emboldened the multitude to fill the palace with contemptible and unknown persons, and this again was caused by their own negligence. He concluded by saying that the only plan he could see to remedy this was to restore the government to the grandees, take away all power from the smaller guilds, and reduce their number from fourteen to seven. This would give the plebeians less power in the council by the decrease in their number, and at the same time increase the authority of the grandees, who owing to their ancient hostility to the plebeians might be relied upon to thwart them. . . . Everybody present approved the advice of Messer Rinaldo, and he was much praised for it. Nicolo da Usano, among others, said that everything which Messer Rinaldo had said was true, and his remedies good and sure, if they could be carried into effect without dividing the city, but this could only be done by bringing Messer Giovanni de' Medici into their plans. When they had secured him, the populace, deprived of its leader, would lose much of its power to do harm. But should this not be accomplished, then they would be unable to effect their desires without arms, and recourse to arms he believed to be dangerous, either by failure to win or ability to enjoy the fruits of victory. He modestly brought to their recollection his past warnings, and their failure to deal with these troubles when it would have been easy to do so. But now that time had passed, and it could only be done at great hazard; there remained indeed no other recourse but to gain over Messer Giovanni. . . .

To this Giovanni replied that he considered it to be the duty of a good and prudent citizen not to change the accustomed ordinances of his city ; that nothing injures so much as frequent changes. . . . Giovanni therefore urged Messer Rinaldo to reconsider his decision and rather imitate his father, who, in order to earn the goodwill of the people, reduced the price of salt, proposed that all whose taxes amounted to less than half a florin should be allowed to pay them or not as they wished, and that on such days as the council met all persons should be secure from their creditors. Giovanni finally said that, as far as he was concerned, he advocated leaving the city to enjoy its present ordinances. . . .

This war<sup>1</sup> lasted from 1422 to 1427, and the citizens of Florence were greatly displeased with the manner in which the taxes had been imposed up to that time and determined to have them levied in some new way. In order to proportion the taxes to a man's property it was decreed that every man should pay at the rate of half a florin on every one hundred florins' worth of property. The public authorities were to levy this tax, and not individuals, and thus it fell heavily upon the richer citizens. It was, however, fiercely contested before it passed into law. The only gentleman who recommended it was Giovanni de' Medici, and by his voice it was carried. And as in levying this tax it fell upon the possessions of every citizen it was called the "Catasto." This system of taxation in some degree checked the tyranny of the upper classes, because they were not able to browbeat the plebeians and with threats make them be silent at the council, as they formerly did. Thus it followed that whilst this taxation was approved by the generality of men, it was regarded with great displeasure by the rich. Moreover, as often happens, men will not rest content with what they have obtained, but will desire something further;

*I.e., against Filippo Visconti.*

so the people in this case, not content with the equality of this system of taxation, demanded that the law should have a retrospective effect, in order that the affairs of the rich should be investigated with a view to discover who among them had paid less than his catasto, and that they should now be made to pay up, so that their contributions should equal the payments of those citizens who in past times had been compelled to sell their possessions to enable them to pay taxes which they ought not to have been called upon to pay. This demand angered the rich classes more than the catasto had done, and they condemned it on every opportunity. They contended it was most unjust to tax movable goods, because they might be possessed one day and lost the next; besides which many men had money hidden away which the catasto could not touch. Then again, those who left their business in order to assist in governing the Republic ought to be less burthened, for it was surely enough for them to give their services to it, and it was not just that the Republic should claim their property as well as enjoy their labours, whilst it only claimed the money of others. Those citizens who were advocates of the catasto rejoined that when the movable property varied then the tax would vary also, and if there were many variations means would be found to remedy any injustice. It was not worth while to take account of hidden money, because if money was not fructifying it was not reasonable to tax it, and if it came into circulation it would at once be discovered. If it did not please men to work for the Republic, then let them leave it to others; this would make no difference, because there were plenty of patriotic citizens to be found who were ready enough to assist the Republic, not only with their counsel, but also with their money. Besides which there were many advantages and honours attaching to the office of rulers which ought to be sufficient without men desiring to shirk the burdens. The opponents to the tax, however,



had not disclosed the real reason of their opposition, which was that the rich could no longer wage war without paying for it, or having to share its burdens with other citizens. If this system of taxation had been in effect before, Florence would have had no war with King Ladislao, nor would there have been the present one with the Duke Filippo, neither of which was necessary, but were undertaken in order to fill the pockets of the rich. These controversies were checked by Giovanni de' Medici, who pointed out that it was not wise to go back on past events, for wisdom consists in learning how to provide for the future. If taxes had formerly been levied unjustly, let them now thank God that a way had been found by which they could be levied with justice. Let everyone aim at making this a means of reuniting the city, and not of dividing it, as would be the case if the back taxes were enforced on a basis equal to the present. The man who is moderate in victory always chooses the better part, for it often happens that those who insist upon having all will end the losers. . . .

#### 4. ORATION OF COSIMO DE' MEDICI TO THE SIGNORY ON BEING EXILED BY THEM, 1433.

[Quoted in *Letters of the Early Medici*, p. 21.]

If I thought that this my misfortune and terrible ruin might serve to bring peace to this blessed people, not only would exile be acceptable, but I should even welcome death, if I were sure that my descendants, O Signori, might pride themselves on my having been the cause of the wished-for union of your Republic. As you have decided that I am to go to Padua, I declare that I am content to go, and to stay wherever you command, not only in the Trevisian State, but should you send me to live among the Arabs, or any other people alien to our customs, I would go most willingly. . . . I know, and this is no small comfort to me, that I never permitted wrong to be done to anyone.

I never frequented the Palace save when I was summoned; I never aroused hatred of the Republic amongst your subalterns because I never ill-treated them; I always declined to be nominated an official, which is often prejudicial to the body and hurtful to the soul. With no small pride I affirm that none can say my ill-behaviour ever caused a city to rebel or to be taken from you. On the contrary, our money bought several. Ask your soldiers how many times they were paid by me for the Commune with my own money, to be returned to me when convenient to the Commune. Never have I been found wanting when the Commune could be enlarged, and although I am exiled, I shall ever be ready at the call of this people. In conclusion, O. Signori, I pray God to keep you in His grace and in happiness in this fortunate Republic, and to give me patience to hear my unhappy life.<sup>1</sup>

5. COSIMO DE' MEDICI TO THE REVEREND MASTER  
MARSILIO FICINO, PLATONIST.

[*Letters of the Early Medici*, p. 73.]

Yesterday I came to the Villa of Careggi, not to cultivate my fields but my soul. Come to us, Marsilio, as soon as possible. Bring with thee our Plato's book, *De Summo Bono*. This, I suppose, you have already translated from the Greek language into Latin as you promised. I desire nothing so much as to know the best road to happiness. Farewell, and do not come without the Orphean lyre.

6. LUCA PITTI.

[MACHIAVELLI: *History of Florence*, "Everyman" edition, pp. 276, 277.]

This government lasted eight years and was harsh, oppressive, and violent. This was owing largely to the fact that Cosimo, old and weary, and weakened also by sickness, could no longer give the necessary attention to

<sup>1</sup> Cosimo was recalled the following year.



public affairs, and a few strong men were allowed to prey upon the rest. Luca Pitti was rewarded with a knighthood for his service to the Republic, and he, not wishing to be behindhand in gratitude towards those who had honoured him, elevated those who had previously been called priors of trade to the dignity of priors of liberty, so that having lost the reality they should retain the name. He decreed also that, whereas the gonfaloniere had previously sat on the right hand of the governors, he should now sit in their midst. And as it appeared to Luca that God had taken a large share in his enterprise, he ordained public processions and solemn ceremonies for the presentation of thanks to God for the restoration of their honours. Messer Luca was richly paid by both the Signoria and Cosimo, and after these had given him great presents, the city, not to be outdone, did the same, and it was generally believed that these presents amounted to 20,000 ducats. By these means he rose to such a high reputation that it was no longer Cosimo who governed Florence but Luca. This inspired him with so much confidence that he began to build two great houses, one in Florence and the other in Ruciano, situate about a mile out of the city, both of them on a superb and regal scale. He neglected no means, however extraordinary, to bring these palaces to a completion, for not only did his friends and the citizens bring him presents, and assist him with materials for the buildings, but the municipality came to his aid. Beyond this, bandits and other men who had incurred the penalties of the law for murders, robberies, or other crimes, could always find a safe refuge in those buildings, if they were persons who could be made useful there. Other citizens, who were not building as he was, were no less violent in their methods, so that although Florence was not desolated by war she was robbed by her own citizens. . . :

7. PIERO DE' MEDICI TO HIS SON LORENZO AT MILAN  
(AGED 17), 1465.

[*Letters of the Early Medici*, p. 93.]

Thou hast arrived at Milan later than I thought, and perhaps than thou didst wish, on account of the delay caused by the honours paid thee by the Duke at Ferrara. I have written to thank him, and to say we are his debtors, and also to Messer Giovanni Bentivoglio I have sent thanks, etc.

Thou art to follow the advice of Pigello<sup>1</sup> and his written instructions; be careful not to worry the Duke, he will have enough of that with this marriage.<sup>2</sup> Thou art to consider thyself as the servant and as belonging to the household of His Excellency, and to ask Pigello's advice as to what visits to pay, and what to say. Remember to be civil and alert; act as a man and not as a boy.

Show sense, industry, and manly endeavour, so that thou mayest be employed in more important things, for this journey is the touchstone of thy abilities. I have sent by carrier the rest of the silver [plate] to Pigello, but have not yet heard of its arrival.

If thou needst aught else let me know; but Pigello will provide all that is necessary, consult with him about inviting Don Federigo one day to the house there or anything else thou thinkest needful. Arrange with him after due reflection, and whatever is settled do with splendour and in honourable fashion. Gugliemo,<sup>3</sup> thou, and Pigello can settle together, and whatever is decided will please me, only, as I said, do not stint money, but do thyself honour. When thou hast time, after having paid thy visits, commend me to the Duke and to Madonna, to Count Galeazzo and to whoso else thou thinkest right. Amuse

<sup>1</sup> Manager of the Medici Bank at Milan.

<sup>2</sup> Ippolita Maria, daughter of Francesco Sforza, was married by proxy to the Duke of Calabria, eldest son of King Ferrante of Naples.

<sup>3</sup> Gugliemo de' Pazzi, husband of Piero's daughter Bianca.

thyself and do not worry about us here, the time will come soon enough when thou wilt have to do so. Nannina is well again ; we will talk of her marriage after thy return from Naples. Gugliemo's family are all well ; tell him not to forget them entirely, and be not so taken up with all those festivities as to forget thyself. I think thou hast better leave there a few days before the others, because as I have Madonna the Princess here in our house, and Gugliemo and thyself being absent, I shall be as a man without hands, but of this I will write later. No more at present. Christ guard thee.

FLORENCE, *May 4, 1465.*

### 8. ST. ANTONINO, ARCHBISHOP OF FLORENCE.

[*Vita di Sant' Antonino scritta da Vespasiano*, Firenze, 1859, p. 9.]

The income of the archbishopric at this time (1446) was 1,500 crowns. He only took sufficient for the bare necessities of the house, which was 500 florins, thus leaving 1,000. This he gave to the poor and wretched, for the love of God. He put his court in order, prohibiting not only all that was simony, but even all on which there was the mere shadow of simony. . . . It happened that in his time there was a great famine in Florence and a great crowd of poor people both in Florence and in the country round. For them he ordered large quantities of bread to be made. He chose certain persons to arrange for almsgiving, and he destined this to be not only for those whom everyone knew to be poor, but also for those who were too proud to admit publicly their poverty, he provided all their necessities secretly. And this company, which still exists in Florence, was instituted by him [Buonuomini di San Martino].

### 9. PIERO DE' MEDICI.

[*Anmirato*, Book XXIII., vol. v., p. 185.]

Piero was a humane man, of a kindly disposition, and in all the changes which befell the Republic in his days

it was owing to his good feeling that his supporters did not stain their hands with the blood of their fellow-citizens, as they badly wished to do. He did not lack experience or keenness of mind, but illness when it lasts long weakens not only the body but the intellect. And his reputation suffered from coming between a father and a son, the brilliance of whose glory could not but dim all other lights. He was carried to his grave, so far as I can learn, without many signs of honour, either because he himself had in his lifetime decreed this, or because this would only have excited envy against his successors, to whom the reality and not the appearance of power was important.

#### 10. RICORDI OF LORENZO THE MAGNIFICENT.

[*Letters of the Early Medici*, p. 154.]

The second day after his death, although I, Lorenzo, was very young, being twenty years of age [1469], the principal men of the city and of the state came to us in our house to condole with us on our loss and to encourage me to take charge of the city and of the state, as my grandfather and my father had done. This I did, though on account of my youth and the great responsibility and perils arising therefrom, with great reluctance, solely for the safety of our friends and our possessions. For it is ill living in Florence for the rich unless they rule the state. Till now we have succeeded with honour and renown, which I attribute not to prudence, but to the grace of God and the good conduct of my predecessors.

#### 11. MARSILIO FICINO TO THE NOBLE LORENZO DE' MEDICI.

[Description of Cosimo de' Medici : *Letters of the Early Medici*, p. 76.]

I, my Lorenzo, for more than twelve years gave myself up to philosophy with him. He was as acute in reasoning as he was prudent and strong in governing. Certainly I owe much to Plato, but must confess that I owe no less

to Cosimo, inasmuch as Plato only once showed me the idea of courage. Cosimo showed it me every day. For the moment I will not mention his other qualities. Cosimo was as avaricious and careful of time as Midas of money; he spent his days parsimoniously, carefully counting every hour and avariciously saving every second; he often lamented the loss of hours. Finally, having like Solon the philosopher (even when occupied in most serious business), diligently studied philosophy, yet even till the last day when he departed from this world of shadows to go to light, he devoted himself to the acquisition of knowledge.

12. AGNOLO POLIZIANO [AGED 16] TO LORENZO DE'  
MEDICI.

[*Letters of the Early Medici*, p. 156.]

Magnificent Lorenzo, to whom Heaven has given charge of the city and the state, first citizen of Florence, doubly crowned with bays lately for war in S. Croce amid the acclamations of the people [alluding to the tournament] and for poetry on account of the sweetness of your verses, give ear to me, who drinking at Greek sources am striving to set Homer into Latin metre. This second book which I have translated (you know we have the first by Messer Carlo d'Arezzo) comes to you and timidly crosses your threshold. If you welcome it I propose to offer you all the *Iliad*. It rests with you, who can, to help the poet. I desire no other muse or other gods but only you; by your help I can do that of which the ancients would not have been ashamed. May it please you therefore at your leisure to give audience to Homer. The young translator, if assailed by a Zoilus, commends himself to you.

Your servant,

1470.

AGNOLO POLIZIANO.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lorenzo, after this, provided for his education, and he became one of his most intimate friends and tutor to his children, a great scholar and writer.



13. PIERO DE' MEDICI [AGED 7] TO HIS FATHER,  
LORENZO.

[The original is in Latin. *Letters of the Early Medici*, p. 217.]

Magnificent father, Lucrezia and I are trying who can write best. She writes to grandmother Lucrezia, I, my father, to you. The one who obtains what he asks for will win. Till now Lucrezia has had all she wished for. I, who have always written in Latin in order to give a more literary tone to my letters, have not yet had that pony you promised me; so that I am laughed at by all. See to it, therefore, your Magnificence, that she should not always be the winner. The war as far as I understand goes in our favour this year, but we do not quite understand how the sword that wounded us is to be broken if only the sheath is hit. For if the enemy makes war on us even outside his own country, on what does he rely for again attacking us another year when tired out? We only hope for peace through victory. Scipio is to be driven to Carthage in order to get Hannibal out of Italy. We beseech you, we, your children, to have the more care for yourself the more you see that the enemy rather lays hidden snares than dares open warfare.

I commend Martino to you, who aids me not to forget my Greek and to improve my Latin. . . .—Your son,

May 26, 1479.

PIERO.

14. FILIPPO STROZZI'S ACCOUNT OF THE ATTEMPTED  
MURDER OF LORENZO AND GIULIANO IN THE  
CATHEDRAL, APRIL 26, 1478.

[Quoted in *Letters of the Early Medici*, p. 190.]

At the words *missa est* Ser Stefano da Bagnone, secretary of Messer Jacopo de' Pazzi and Messer Antonio Maffei of Volterra, assailed Lorenzo de' Medici, while Francesco de' Pazzi and Bernardo Bandini fell upon Giuliano.

Both were walking round the choir outside, and Lorenzo at once understood, drew his sword, leaped into the choir, rushed across in front of the altar, entered the new sacristy, and ordered the door to be locked. There he remained until aid came from his house. He was only wounded in the neck and in a few days was well.

Francesco de' Pazzi and Bernardo Bandini sprang at Giuliano, who was walking in front of the chapel of the cross, and with ten or twelve blows laid him dead on the pavement; they also killed Francesco Nori, who was with him.

The uproar was great in the church. I was there talking with Messer Bongianni and the other gentlemen and we were all struck with astonishment, people flying now here, now there, while the church resounded with loud shouts, and arms were seen in the hands of partisans of the Pazzi who had joined in this matter.

The Cardinal was left all alone by the side of the altar, until some priests came and led him into the old sacristy, where he remained till two of the Eight with many soldiers arrived and took him to the Palace. . . .

### 15. PERUGINO (b. 1446) ON FLORENCE.

[*Lives of Italian Painters*, by GIORGIO VASARI. Selected and prefaced by Havelock Ellis. Pp. 110-11.]

The boy [Pietro Perugino] would thus often inquire of such persons as he knew to have seen the world, in what city the best artists were formed? This question he addressed more particularly to his instructor, from whom he constantly received the same reply, namely, that Florence was the place, above all others, wherein men attain to perfection in all the arts, but more especially in painting. And to this, he said, they were impelled by three causes: first, by the censure freely expressed by so many persons and in such various modes, for the air of that city gives a natural quickness and freedom to the perceptions of men, so that they cannot content themselves



with mediocrity in the works presented to them, which they always judge with reference to the honour of the good and beautiful in art, rather than with respect to, or consideration for, the man who has produced them : next, that, to obtain the means of life in Florence, a man must be industrious, which is as much as to say that he must keep his skill and judgment in perpetual activity, must be ever ready and rapid in his proceedings ; must know, in short, how to gain money, seeing that Florence, not having a rich and abundant domain around her, cannot supply the means of life to those who abide within her walls, at light cost, as can be done in countries where produce abounds largely. The third cause, which is, perhaps, not less effectual than the other two, is the desire for glory and honour, which is powerfully generated by the air of that place, in the men of every profession, and whereby all who possess talent are impelled to struggle, that they may not remain in the same grade with those whom they perceive to be only men like themselves (much less will any consent to remain behind another), even though they may acknowledge such to be indeed Masters ; but all labour by every means to be foremost, insomuch that some desire their own exaltation so eagerly as to become thankless for benefits, censorious of their competitors, and, in many ways, evil-minded, unless that effect be prevented by natural excellence and sense of justice.

16. PIER FILIPPO PANDOLFINI, FLORENTINE AMBASSADOR  
AT ROME, TO LORENZO DE' MEDICI.

[*Letters of the Early Medici*, p. 325.]

Monsignor d' Arles told me yesterday morning that the Signoria of Venice and all the Venetian gentlemen are very irate with us for two things. First, because, according to them, we tried through the Soldan to prevent that journey of theirs.

Secondly, on account of the agreement about wool from

England, which they have so much at heart that they could not be more angry and are decided to upset it at any cost. They have ordered that all ships carrying wool to Pisa, no matter to whom they belong, are to be prevented from loading in Candia, Cyprus, or any other place where they have ports, and that no ship of theirs is to touch at Porto Pisano. I do not know whether it would be good to inform Tommaso Portinari so that he might tell the King of England and explain to him the harm which this decision will do to H.M. and to his subjects, and that the Venetians want to be masters and dictate laws to them

17. LORENZO'S LETTER TO THE DUKE ERCOLE D' ESTE.

[*Letters of the Early Medici*, p. 244.]

ILLUSTRISIME DOMINE MI,

Although in tears and in great grief, I cannot but inform your Excellency of the terrible loss I have sustained by the death of my most dear mother, Madonna Lucrezia, who to-day quitted this life. I am more full of sorrow than I can say, as besides losing a mother, at the mere thought of whom my heart breaks, I have lost the counsellor who took many a burden from off me. It has pleased God that this should be and we neither can nor ought to contest His will. . . .

LAURENTIUS DE MEDICIS.

FLORENCE, *March* 25, 1482.

LUCREZIA.

[LUIGI PULCI's "Rime."]

Con la tua grazia, Vergine Maria,  
Conserva la devota alma e verace,  
Monna Lucrezia, tua benigna e pia,  
Con carità perfetta e vera pace.

[Of thy grace, Holy Virgin, preserve that devoted spirit and true, Monna Lucrezia, blessed and kind, gifted with perfect love and of true tranquillity.]

18. A MANAGER OF THE MEDICI BANK TO THE  
DUKE ERCOLE D' ESTE.

[*Letters of the Early Medici*, p. 309.]

TO THE ILLUSTRIOUS DUKE ERCOLE, ETC.

According to the usual custom and rule we advise you that to-day the Magnificent Lorenzo has lent Pope Innocent 100,000 ducats for a year; one-third in cash, one-third in silk goods, and one-third in woollen cloth. As surety he has two-tenths on the stipends of all newly appointed priests, 70,000 ducats, and for the rest he will hold Città di Castello until entirely repaid. I give you another piece of news: Pope Innocent has given the Magnificent Lorenzo 30,000 cantara of alum at 1 ducat the cantaro as payment of what was owing to him by Pope Sixtus, the 40,000 he received for the war, which is good news.—Your servant and particular partisan,

B. DES. OF THE MEDICI BANK.

FLORENCE, 1489.

19. MESSER GUIDONE ALDROVANDINI, AMBASSADOR OF  
FERRARA TO THE REPUBLIC OF FLORENCE, TO THE  
DUKE ERCOLE D' ESTE.

[*Letters of the Early Medici*, p. 277.]

This evening about 24 of the clock came the letter of your Illustrious Lordship. I went at once to the Magnificent Lorenzo and read him the whole letter entreating him in your Excellency's name to keep it absolutely secret. When his Magnificence heard it I assure your Lordship that he remained for a time without opening his lips from agony and rage, and then said, "I believe all that is evil of this Pope, the more so that to-day I heard from Rome that S. Piero in Vincula is going to Padua on the pretence of fulfilling a vow, but really in order to conclude a league with the Venetians and settle everything."

Then he added, "This ecclesiastical state has always

been the ruin of Italy, because being ignorant and not knowing how to govern, the priests put the whole world in peril. If His Majesty puts an end to the Barons, he will then teach the Pope to read." About the news that Signor Roberto was to lead the Genoese against him, etc., he did not seem to care much, or to hold them in much estimation, saying that they would need other men than the crews of galleys. He then said, "If Signor Roberto is to be the instrument of this it is not serious."<sup>1</sup> By these words I gathered that His Magnificence did not greatly fear Signor Roberto on account of the friendship existing between them and that he meant, according to my poor judgment, that Signor Roberto would not make war on Florence; though he did not express himself clearly.

FLORENCE, November 20, 1486.

20. TO THE SIGNORIA OF FLORENCE FROM LORENZO DE' MEDICI (WRITTEN AFTER HE HAD STARTED FOR NAPLES).

[*Letters of the Early Medici*, p. 229.]

MOST ILLUSTRIOUS MY LORDS,

It is not from presumption that I did not notify the reason of my departure to Your Illustrious Excellencies, but because it seemed to me that the agitated and disturbed condition of our city demands acts and not words. I conceive that she desires, and indeed has extreme need of, peace. Seeing that all other endeavours have been fruitless, I have determined to run some peril in my own person rather than expose the city to disaster. Therefore, with the permission of Your Excellencies of the Signoria, I have decided to go openly to Naples. Being the one most hated

<sup>1</sup> The King and barons of Naples were at war with one another, 1485. The King took prisoner the Count of Montorio. Aquila appealed to Pope Innocent. He took their side and appointed Roberto di Sanseverino as his General. Florence took Naples' side; Venice and Genoa the Pope's. The ensuing war brought nothing but suffering and destruction to people in the districts of Naples and Rome.

and persecuted by our enemies, I may by placing myself in their hands be the means of restoring peace to our city. One of two things is certain : either His Majesty the King loves our city as he has asserted and some have believed, and is attempting to gain our friendship by affronting us rather than by despoiling us of liberty ; or His Majesty really desires the ruin of this Republic. If his intentions are good there is no better way of testing them than by placing myself voluntarily in his power, and I make bold to say that this is the only way to make peace and to render the condition of our city stable. If His Majesty the King intends to attack our liberty it seems to me well to know the worst quickly, and that one should be injured rather than the many. I am most glad to be that one, for two reasons : first, because being the principal object of our enemies' hatred I can more easily and better explain all to the King, as it may be that our enemies only seek to injure me. The other reason is that having a greater position and larger stake in our city, not only than I deserve, but probably than any citizen in our days, I am more bound than any other man to give up all to my country, even my life. These are the feelings with which I go, for perchance our Lord God desires that this war, which began with the blood of my brother and my own, should be put an end to by me. My ardent wish is that either my life or my death, my misfortunes or my well-being, should contribute to the good of our city. I shall therefore carry out my idea.

If it succeeds according to my wishes and hopes I shall be most glad to benefit my country at the risk of my life and at the same time to save myself. Should evil befall me I shall not complain if it benefits our city as it certainly must : for if our adversaries only aim at me, they will have me in their hands ; if they want aught else, it will be patent to all. I am certain that our citizens will unite to protect their liberty, so that by the grace of God



it will be defended as was always done by our fathers. I go full of hope, and with no other object than the good of the city, and I pray God to give me grace to perform what is the duty of every man towards his country. I commend myself humbly to Your Excellencies of the Signoria.—Your Excellencies' servant,

LAURENTIUS DE MEDICIS.

*From SAN MINIATO, on the 7th of December, 1479.*

## 21. VISIT OF GIOVANNI GALEAZZO, DUKE OF MILAN, TO FLORENCE IN 1471:

[*Ammirato*, Book XXIII., vol. v., p. 188, Florence, 1848.]

When Gino Capponi, son of Neri, was Gonfalonier, there came to Florence, in pursuance of a vow, the Duke Giovanni Galeazzo accompanied by his wife and a magnificent retinue. He was lodged by Lorenzo de' Medici at his private expense; the other gentlemen and courtiers who followed him were entertained and assigned rooms and houses at the public expense, by the Signory.

This prince was indeed very magnificent at home, so that those who tell the story of his arrival at Florence speak of the wonders of his grandeur. Among other things he had carried on mules over the Alps twelve litters for the service of his duchess and her ladies. They had covers of cloth of gold, elegantly embroidered in silver, besides fifty most beautiful hackneys led by hand, for his wife's personal use, and fifty great chargers for himself, with saddles of cloth of gold, and other rich trappings; a hundred men-at-arms and five hundred infantry for his escort, fifty grooms in cloth of silver and in silk to hold the stirrup, five hundred couples of dogs, and an infinite number of falcons and hawks, to be used in hunting and fowling.

This pomp was imitated by the courtiers and nobles, all of whom brought horses, to the number of two thousand, which made the most superb and beautiful spectacle that one could see at that time. Nevertheless, though young

and proud, and placed by fortune in so great an eminence, he had to admit that the magnificence of Lorenzo outshone his by a long way, since in the treasures of the Medici the value of the material was enhanced by the mastery and excellence of the workmanship, which, the more noble it is, the less common it is, and only to be acquired with difficulty and effort: and the things themselves more for their rarity than their costliness were to be regarded with amazement and wonder.

He had himself seen a great number of vases of stones which were precious and brought from distant lands, which his famous grandfather had after much time and with great expense and perseverance collected and brought together.

He regarded with great admiration the many pictures painted by the best masters, being by his own nature much attracted by them. A greater number of these he said he had seen in the palace of the Medici than in the whole of the rest of Italy; also of drawings, statues, and other works in marble, both by modern and ancient sculptors, of medals, jewels, books, and other rare things of great value compared with which he should estimate as of little worth large sums of gold and silver.

## 22. WAR WITH VOLTERRA OVER THE ALUM MINES.

[MACHIAVELLI: *Florentine History*, "Everyman" edition, pp. 304-307.]

Amid this profound peace a new and unexpected trouble arose in Tuscany. Alum mines had been discovered in Volterra, the value of which was well known to some citizens of that place, who in order to raise money for the development of the same had taken partners who were to share with them the advantages arising from the mines. Such was the beginning of the affair, and, as often happens in new enterprises, the mines were little valued; but when time showed the advantage of them to the people of Volterra, they began to agitate for the possession of what



they might have once had without any trouble. They brought the subject before the council, and stated that it was against public policy for an industry founded on public property to be worked for private advantage. The citizens also sent envoys to Florence to represent their views to the authorities there; by them it was referred to certain gentlemen for decision. Whether they were bribed by interested parties, or were only influenced by a desire for justice, it was adjudged that the people of Volterra had no right to deprive their citizens of the fruits of their foresight and industry, and therefore the alum mines belonged to private individuals and not to the public, but a certain payment should be made by the mines each year in recognition of the over-lordship of the state. This decision did not in any degree assuage but rather increased the animosities in Volterra, and the subject was violently discussed both in and out of the council chamber. The majority of the people urged the authorities to seize the mines, whilst it was only a few who had first acquired them who now desired them retained. When the judgment was confirmed a great disturbance was made in Volterra, in which a citizen of some repute, called Pecorino, and some others who supported him, were killed and their houses sacked and burnt; the Florentine governor was only saved from death with great difficulty.

The Volterrans, having flouted the people of Florence in this way, decided to send envoys to them informing the Signori that, if the Florentines were willing to observe their ancient treaties, the Volterrans for their part were willing to be bound by their ancient obligations. The reply to this message was much debated by the Signori. . . . An expedition was therefore determined upon, and the Volterrans were informed they were not in a position to demand the observance of ancient treaties, seeing they themselves had broken them; they must either submit to the judgment of the Signoria or prepare for war.

Immediately the Volterrans received this message they prepared for war by fortifying the town and sending to several princes of Italy for assistance ; but few listened to them, only the Sienese and the Lord of Piombino gave any prospect of support. Knowing well that the effect of victory is enhanced by its swiftness, the Florentines sent 10,000 infantry and 2,000 cavalry under the command of Federigo of Urbino into the districts round Volterra, which were quickly occupied. After this they approached the city, which being placed upon a hill could only be assaulted on the side near to the church of San Alessandro, the other sides being heavily fortified. The Volterrans had engaged about 1,000 soldiers in their defence, who were quite overawed when they saw the vigour with which the Florentines were pressing on their preparations for the attack ; but however backward the soldiers might be in fighting the Florentines they were very ready in plundering the Volterrans. Thus the poor citizens, harassed by their foes from outside, plundered by their friends within, and despairing of safety, began to think of peace. No other course suggesting itself, they submitted to the commissioners ; the gates were opened and the army admitted. The officers went direct to the palace where the signori were sitting and ordered them to return to their homes. On their way there one of the signori was set upon and robbed, and as men are always more ready for evil than for good this acted as a signal for the sack and destruction of the city. For a whole day it was overrun with riot, neither woman nor sacred place was spared, and the people were equally pillaged and wronged by the soldiery, whether of the attacking or defending army. The news of this victory was joyfully received in Florence, and as it had been the enterprise of Lorenzo he leapt at once into fame. One of his friends took upon himself to reprove Messer Tommaso Soderini for his advice, asking him, "What have you to say now that Volterra has been taken ?" To which

Messer Tommaso replied, "It appears to me to have been lost, because if you had received it in peace, it would have been secure and profitable to you; but seeing that you will have to hold it by force, you will find it a source of loss and expense in time of peace and of anxiety and weakness in war."

### 23. LORENZO'S SCHOOL OF SCULPTURE.

[*Lives of the Artists*, by GIORGIO VASARI. Translated by Mrs. Foster, in Bohn's Series, vol. ii., p. 482.]

In his youth he [Torrighiano] was taken by Lorenzo de' Medici the elder (Il Magnifico) into the garden which the latter possessed on the Piazza of San Marco in Florence, and which that magnificent citizen had decorated in the richest manner with figures from the antique and examples of the best sculptures. In the loggie, the walks, and all the buildings there were the noblest statues in marble, admirable works of the ancients, with pictures and other productions of art by the most eminent masters, whether of Italy or of other countries. All these treasures, to say nothing of the noble ornament they formed to the garden, were as a school or academy for the young painters and sculptors, as well as for all others devoted to the arts of design. . . . But men of genius were always protected by the magnificent Lorenzo, and more especially did he favour such of the nobles as he perceived to have an inclination for the study of art; and it is therefore no matter of astonishment that masters should have proceeded from this school, some of whom have awakened the surprise, as well as the admiration, of the world. And not only did Lorenzo provide the means of instruction, but also those of life for all who were too poor to pursue their studies without such aid; nay, he further supplied them with proper clothing, and even bestowed considerable presents on any one among them who had distinguished himself from his fellows by some well-executed design; all which

so encouraged the young students of our arts that, labouring in emulation of each other, many of them became excellent masters.

24. VISIT OF POLIZIANO TO CASSANDRA FIDELIS. LETTER  
TO LORENZO DE' MEDICI.

[Appendix 21, Roscoe's *Life of Lorenzo de' Medici*, edition 1851,  
p. 458.]

MAGNIFICENT LORENZO,

I visited yesterday the famous and learned Cassandra Fedele and saluted her in your name, and certainly, Lorenzo, she is wonderful not only in her own language but in Latin, most wise, and to my eyes beautiful also.

I departed, amazed at her.

She thinks very highly of you and speaks of you constantly, as if she understood you intimately. At any rate, she will come one day to Florence to see you, so be prepared to do her honour.

POLIZIANO.

VENICE, *June* 20, 1491.

25. LORENZO DE' MEDICI TO HIS SON PIERO IN ROME,  
NOVEMBER 26, 1484.

[*Letters of the Early Medici*, p. 261.]

. . . Thou wilt have a list of Sienese citizens to whom, if there is time, thou art to pay visits, using the same words I have already indicated and offering me to them, as well as to the three above-named, for the protection of their state, all the more that our city is of this mind.

When together with other youths of the ambassadors bear thyself sedately, politely, and kindly towards thy equals. Be careful not to take precedence of those who are thine elders, for although thou art my son thou art but a citizen of Florence, as they are. When Giovanni [Tornabuoni] thinks fit to present thee to the Pope privately first inform thyself well of all the needful

ceremonies, then when presented to His Sanctity kiss my letter which will be given thee for the Pope, entreating him to deign to read it. When it is thy turn to speak, first place me at the feet of His Beatitude, saying that I am aware it was my duty to prostrate myself in person at the feet of His Holiness, as I did at those of his Predecessor of saintly memory ; but that I trust in his goodness to forgive me, because at that time I had my brother who was well able to fill my place, whereas at present I have no man of greater years and authority than thyself [aged 14], and therefore I do not think it would have been pleasing to His Holiness if I had left Florence. . . .

26. MATTEO FRANCO TO SER PIERO DOVIZI DA BIBBIENA,  
CHANCELLOR OF LORENZO DE' MEDICI, WHEREVER  
HE MAY BE.

[*Letters of the Early Medici*, p. 268.]

. . . And thus, till about two miles from Colle di Val d' Elsa, we continued singing, joking, and talking. Then we became almost dumb, for nearly all our words migrated into a brother of Antonio del Pela who came to meet us, and conducted us into a tumbledown and ruined village of Colle to a house of the said Antonio. He came forward with such a river and flood of words that he nearly drowned his brother, and us, and all who were near, and showed that he was truly the elder and the better brother. On entering the hall we found about thirty-five members of his family—girls, women, and children. My bore immediately began : “Madonna Clarice [*Lorenzo's wife*], this is my daughter, come forward, kiss the lady's hand ; and this is my granddaughter, come forward, touch her gown. And this one, and this one. And these little ones are all my grandchildren ; hold yourselves up, think of your manners ; this one is to be a priest, this one a nun, to this one Madonna Lucrezia stood godmother, this one I have just given in marriage, this one makes Venetian fringe,



that one lace." Plague take him ! If I had not pulled him away he would have cast a spell on us all. But by asserting how tired Madonna Clarice and we all were I managed to damp his ardour. We arrived about twenty-two or twenty-three of the clock, and after resting we went to see paper made and returned to fetch Madonna Clarice, who thought it a pretty thing, and was much interested in the machines, the water, the air, etc. Then we went back and supped about one of the clock : a few wafers, cakes and trebbiano, salad and pickles, boiled fowl and kid ; and then young pigeons roasted, and I know not what preparation of fowl, marzipan, sweets, and comfits, etc. Before supper the commune of Colle made an offering to Madonna of corn, marzipan, wine, sweetmeats, etc. presented by eloquent orators three out of the number.

27. LORENZO DE' MEDICI TO GIOVANNI LANFREDINI,  
FLORENTINE AMBASSADOR AT ROME.

[*Letters of the Early Medici*, p. 310.]

The Count della Mirandola is here leading a most saintly life, like a monk. He has been and is now occupied in writing admirable theological works : commentaries and Psalms, and other excellent works on theology. He recites the ordinary priest's office, observes all fasts and absolute chastity ; has but a small retinue, and lives quite simply with only what is necessary. To me he appears an example to other men. He is anxious to be absolved from what little contumacy is still attributed to him by the Holy Father,<sup>1</sup> and to have a Brief by which His Holiness accepts him as a son and a good Christian, he persevering in a Christian life. I greatly desire that this satisfaction should be given to him, for there are few men I love better or esteem more. I feel certain that he is a devout and

<sup>1</sup> Pico della Mirandola had in 1486 published nine hundred theses theology, philosophy, magic, and the Cabbala. Against these Innocent VIII. issued a Brief.

faithful Christian, and his conduct is such that the whole city would vouch for him. Do all you can to obtain this Brief in such a form that it may content his conscience. This would be not less agreeable to me than any one of the many services you have rendered, and for which I am most grateful.

*June 19, 1489.*

28. LIFE OF GIOVANNI PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA, TRANSLATED BY SIR THOMAS MORE, 1510.

Under the rule of governaunce of his mother he was set to maysters and to lernynge : where with so ardent mynde he labored the studyes of humanite, that within short whyle he was (and not without a cause) accompted among the chyef Oratours and Poetes of that time. . . .

As a desyrous enserchour of the secretes of nature he lefte these commyn trodn pathes and gave hym selfe hole to speculation and philosophy as well humane and devyne. For the purchasyng wherof (afte the maner of Plato and Apollonius) he scrupulously sought out all the famous doctours of his time visytyng studiously all the unyversytes and scoles not only through Italy, but also through Fraunce. . . .

For he was not of the condycion of some folke (which to be excellent in one thing set all other asyde) but he in all sciences profyted so excellently ; that which of theym so ever he had consydered, in him ye wolde have thought that he had taken that one for his onely studye. And all these thynges were in him so much the more mervelouse in that he came thereto by hym selfe with the strength of his owne wytte for the love of God and profyte his chyrche, without maysters, so that we may saye of hym that Epycure the philosophre sayd of hym, that he was his owne mayster. . . .

To pore men alway yf ony came he plenteously gave out his money, and not content onely to gyve that he had



hym selfe redy : he wrote over it to one Hierom Benivenius a Florentin, and well letred man . . . that he sholde with his owne money ever helpe poore folke ; and gyve maydens money to theyre maryage ; and alway sende him worde what he had layde out that he myght pay hit him ageyn.

. . . What sorowe and hevynes his departyng out of this worlde was ; both to rich and poor hygh and lowe : well testyfyeth the prynces of Italye, well wytnesseth the cities and people.

## 29. THE DEATH OF LORENZO, DESCRIBED BY POLIZIANO.

[*Letters of the Early Medici*, p. 337.]

. . . Then he devoted himself to consoling his son Piero, for the others were not there, and exhorted him to bear this law of necessity with courage, feeling sure that the aid of Heaven would be vouchsafed to him as it had been to himself in many and divers occasions, if he only acted wisely. Meanwhile your Lazarus, the doctor from Pavia, arrived, most learned as it seemed to me, but summoned too late to be of any use. Yet to do something he ordered various precious stones to be pounded together in a mortar for I know not what kind of medicine. Lorenzo thereupon asked the servants what the doctor was doing in his room and what he was preparing, and when I answered that he was composing a remedy to comfort his intestines he recognized my voice, and looking kindly as is his wont : "Oh, Angiolo!" he said, "art thou here?" and raising his languid arms took both my hands and pressed them tightly. I could not stifle my sobs or stay my tears though I tried to hide them by turning my face away. But he showed no emotion and continued to press my hands between his. When he saw that I could not speak for crying, quite naturally he loosened my hands, and I ran into the adjoining room where I could give free vent to my grief and to my tears. Then drying my eyes I returned, and as soon as he saw me he called me to him

and asked what Pico della Mirandola was doing. I replied that Pico had remained in town fearing to molest him with his presence. "And I," said Lorenzo, "but for the fear that the journey here might be irksome to him would be most glad to see him and speak to him for the last time before I leave you all." I asked if I should send for him. "Certainly, and with all speed," answered he. This I did, and Pico came and sat by the bed, whilst I leaned against his knees in order to hear the languid voice of my lord for the last time. With what goodness, with what courtesy, I may say with what caresses, Lorenzo received him. First he asked his pardon for thus disturbing him, begging him to regard it as a sign of the friendship—the love—he bore him, assuring him that he died more willingly after seeing so dear a friend. Then introducing, as was his wont, pleasant and familiar sayings, he joked also with us. "I wish," he said to Pico, "that death had spared me until your library had been complete." Pico had hardly left the room when Fra Girolamo [Savonarola] of Ferrara, a man celebrated for his doctrine and his sanctity and an excellent preacher, came in. To his exhortations to remain firm in his faith and to live in future, if God granted him life, free from crime, or if God so willed it to receive death willingly, Lorenzo answered that he was firm in his religion, that his life would always be guided by it, and that nothing could be sweeter to him than death, if such was the divine will. Fra Girolamo then turned to go, when Lorenzo said: "Oh, Father, before going deign to give me thy benediction." Bowing his head, immersed in piety and religion, he repeated the words and the prayers of the friar, without paying any attention to the grief now openly shown of his attendants. It seemed that all, save Lorenzo, were going to die, so calm was he. He gave no signs of anxiety or of sorrow; even in that supreme moment he showed his usual strength of mind and his fortitude. The doctors who stood round, not to seem

idle, worried him with their remedies and assistance. He submitted to everything they suggested, not because he thought it would save him, but in order not to offend anyone, even in death. To the last he had such mastery over himself that he joked about his own death. Thus when given something to eat and asked how he liked it, he replied, "As well as a dying man can like anything." He embraced us all tenderly and humbly asked pardon if during his illness he had caused annoyance to anyone. Then, disposing himself to receive extreme unction, he commended his soul to God. . . .

FIESOLE, *May* 18, 1492.

### 30. THE POSITION OF FLORENCE AT THE DEATH OF LORENZO.

[GUICCIARDINI: *Opere inedite*, vol. iii., p. 82.]

The city was in a state of profound peace, and the governing classes of the citizens were so united and so closely knït together and their power was so firmly established that no man dared to question it. The people were kept amused every day by shows, festivals, and novelties. They were well fed from the provisions with which the city abounded. Industry of every sort flourished. Talented and able men were maintained, and a welcome and a position secured to all teachers of literature, art, and every liberal pursuit. And lastly the city was not only in a state of perfect peace and quietness within the walls, but it was glorious abroad and enjoyed a high reputation because it had a strong government and a man of great authority at the head of it, also because it had recently increased its territory. It had been in great part the cause first of the salvation of Ferrara and afterwards of King Ferdinand. It had paramount influence with Pope Innocent. It was allied with Naples and with Milan, and in fact held almost the balancing power of all Italy. Then occurred an unforeseen incident which turned every-

thing upside down with disastrous results, not only to the city but to all Italy.

And that was that in the year 1492 Lorenzo de' Medici, who had been ill a long time and whose illness the doctors did not think of much importance, but one which could be cured with care, whereas it had been always growing worse, at last in April passed out of this present life.

### 31. BUONACCORSO PITTI'S ACCOUNT OF JOURNEYS TO PARIS IN 1395.

[BUONACCORSO PITTI : *Cronica*. Bologna, 1905. P. 99.]

They elected as ambassadors Messer Vanni Chastellani, Messer Filippo Corsini—at that time a doctor—and myself, to be sent to France, and the Signoria requested me to go there at once. I started on the 15th of January, taking the road by Friuli and through Germany. I spent thirty-four days on that part of the journey, amid the snow, going over the top of a mountain called Arlberg. I got through then only by the help of the men who dug away the snow, and of the oxen also, and thus made a way through. I reached Constance, and then Bâle, Langres, and finally Paris. . . .

We decided that I should return [to Florence] and I travelled by way of Burgundy and Germany and descended to Friuli. Having arrived at Treviso, I heard that our ambassadors from Florence were at Venice with the Lord of Padua and other ambassadors of the League. I took two horses and a carriage, and all my other horses and my household except one servant I sent to Padua. I myself went to Venice. . . . I left there on the 22nd of March at nine o'clock at night and rested at Mestre, and was at Padua at two o'clock in the morning. On the 23rd I set out early and with two riding horses belonging to the Lord of Padua, and without eating or drinking, I reached Ferrara at eight o'clock that evening. Here I hired two of

the marquis's horses and went on to San Giorgio, within ten miles of Bologna, to sleep. In the morning before sunrise I went to Bologna, and taking two hacks and a carriage I reached Scharperia late at night. I arrived in Florence early on the morning of March 25th; thus in two days and a third I had come from Padua to Florence, having ridden from Paris to Padua in sixteen days.

32. LETTER OF AMERIGO VESPUCCI<sup>1</sup> TO PIER SODERINI,  
GONFALONIER OF THE REPUBLIC OF FLORENCE.

[*The First Four Voyages of Amerigo Vespucci.* Bernard Quaritch,  
London, 1893.]

The chief cause which moved [me] to write to you, was by the request of the present bearer, who is named Benvenuto Benvenuti our Florentine [*fellow citizen*], very much, as it is proven, your Magnificence's servant, and my very good friend: who happening to be here in this city of Lisbon, begged that I should make communication to your Magnificence of the things seen by me in divers regions of the world, by virtue of four voyages which I have made in discovery of new lands: two by order of the King of Castile,<sup>2</sup> King Don Ferrando VI., across the great gulph of the Ocean-sea towards the west: and the other two by command of the puissant King Don Manuel King of Portugal, towards the south: Telling me that your Magnificence would take pleasure thereof, and that herein he hoped to do you service: wherefore I set me to do it: because I am assured that your Magnificence holds me in

<sup>1</sup> Amerigo Vespucci, born in Florence, 1451. Became Cadiz agent of the Medici Company in 1492. He was enrolled a member of the Guild of Doctors and Apothecaries in 1497; sailed to the New World 1497, 1499, 1501, 1503. Died 1512. The *Lettera di Amerigo Vespucci delle Isole nuovamente trovate in quattro Suoi Viaggi* give an account of his voyages.

<sup>2</sup> This lack of precision with regard to Ferdinand's title may be compared with similar carelessness on the early maps which refer to America.



the number of your servants, remembering that in the time of our youth I was your friend, and now [*am your*] servant: and [*remembering our*] going to hear the rudiments of grammar under the fair example and instruction of the venerable monk friar of Saint Mark Fra Giorgio Antonio Vespucci: whose counsels and teaching would to God that I had followed: for as saith Petrarch, I should be another man than what I am. . . . As I said above, we left the port of Cadiz four consort ships<sup>1</sup>: and began our voyage in a direct course to the Fortunate Isles, which are called to-day *la gran Canaria*, . . . and so we sailed on till at the end of 37<sup>2</sup> days we reached a land which we deemed to be a continent: . . . and we put out our boats freighted with men and arms: we made towards the land, and before we reached it, had sight of a great number of people who were going along the shore: by which we were much rejoiced. . . . They are of medium stature, very well proportioned: their flesh is of a colour that verges into red like a lion's mane: and I believe that if they went clothed, they would be as white as we: they have not any hair upon the body, except the hair of the head which is long and black, and especially in the women, whom it renders handsome: . . . they are very light-footed in walking and in running, as well the men as the women: so that a woman reckons nothing of running a league or two, as many times we saw them do: and herein they have a very great advantage over us Christians: they swim [*with an expertness*] beyond all belief, and the women better than the men: for we have many times found and seen them swimming two leagues out at sea without any thing to rest upon. . . . When they go to war, they take their women with them not that these may fight, but because they carry behind them their worldly goods: for a woman carries on her back for thirty or forty leagues a load which no man could bear: as we have many times seen them do. . . . Many tribes came to

<sup>1</sup> *Navi di conserva.*<sup>2</sup> The Latin has 27 $\frac{3}{4}$ .



see us, and wondered at our faces and our whiteness : and they asked us whence we came : and we gave them to understand that we had come from heaven, and that we were going to see the world, and they believed it. In this land we placed baptismal fonts, and an infinite [*number of*] people were baptized, and they called us in their language Carabi, which means men of great wisdom. We took our departure from that port : and the province is called Lariab : . . . We had now been thirteen months on the voyage : and the vessels and the tackling were already much damaged, and the men worn out by fatigue : we decided by general council to haul our ships on land and examine them for the purpose of stanching leaks,<sup>1</sup> as they made much water, and of caulking and tarring them afresh, and [*then*] returning towards Spain : and when we came to this determination, we were close to a harbour the best in the world : into which we entered with our vessels : where we found an immense number of people : who received us with much friendliness : . . . and [*now*] desiring to depart upon our voyage, they made complaint to us how at certain times of the year there came from over the sea to this their land, a race of people very cruel, and enemies of theirs : . . . and so piteously did they tell us this that we believed them : and we promised to avenge them of so much wrong : . . . and at the end of the seven days we came upon the islands, which were many, some [*of them*] inhabited, and others deserted : and we anchored at one of them : where we saw a numerous people who called it Iti : and having manned our boats with strong crews, and [*taken*] three guns in each, we made for land : . . . and having armed ourselves as best we could, we advanced towards the shore, and they sought not to hinder us from landing, I believe from fear of the cannons : and we jumped on land, 57 men in four squadrons, each one [*consisting of*] a captain and his company : and we came to

<sup>1</sup> *Stancharle* (? *stagnarle*).

blows with them: and after a long battle [*in which*] many of them [*were*] slain, we put them to flight, and pursued them to a village, having made about 250 of them captives, and we burnt the village, and returned to our ships with victory and 250 prisoners<sup>1</sup> leaving many of them dead and wounded, and of ours there were no more than one killed, and 22 wounded, who all escaped [*i.e., recovered*], God be thanked. We arranged our departure, and the seven men, of whom five were wounded, took an island-canoe, and, with seven prisoners that we gave them, four women and three men, returned to their [*own*] country full of gladness, wondering at our strength: and we thereupon made sail for Spain with 222 captive slaves: and reached the port of Cadiz on the 15 day of October 1498, where we were well received and sold our slaves. Such is what befel me, most noteworthy, in this my first voyage.

### 33. MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI.

[VASARI: *Lives of Italian Painters*.—Selected and prefaced by Havelock Ellis, pp. 257-258, 275-276.]

. . . Having a true love for art, Lorenzo grieved that in his time there should be found no great and noble sculptors who could take rank with the many painters of high fame and merit then existing, and he resolved, as I have said, to form a School. To this end he requested Domenico Ghirlandajo to send to the garden any youth whom he might find disposed to the study of sculpture, when Lorenzo promised to provide for his progress, hoping thus

<sup>1</sup> Varnhagen thought we ought to read "25" (not 250), like the Latin version, and to correct the figures "222" lower down into "22," in both the text and the Latin. But he was in error, having omitted to observe that the figures "250" occur *twice*. He evidently looked more on the Latin than the text. Besides, a capture of only 25 savages would be very little indeed for the European force to make, whether we reckon it at 57 men or 228 men, as he and the Latinizer read it (four squadrons, each of 57 men, with its captain), especially when they had entered into hostilities with the express intention of making captives. [He afterwards corrected himself.]

to create, so to speak, such artists as should do honour to his city.

By Domenico, therefore, were presented to him among others, Michelagnolo and Francesco Granacci, as excellent for this purpose. They went to the garden accordingly, and found there Torrigiano, a youth of the Torrigiani family, who was executing in terra certain figures in full relief which Bertoldo had given him. Seeing this, and aroused to emulation, Michelagnolo began to attempt the same; when Lorenzo, perceiving his fine abilities, conceived great hope of his future success, and he, much encouraged, took a piece of marble, after having been there but a few days, and set himself to copy the head of an old Faun from the antique. The nose of the original was much injured, the mouth was represented laughing, and this Michelagnolo, who had never before touched chisel or marble, did in fact copy in such a manner, that the Magnifico was utterly amazed. . . .

He sent for Ludovico, therefore, requesting the latter to entrust the youth to his care, and saying that he would treat him as a son of his own, to which Ludovico consented gladly; when Lorenzo gave orders that a room in his own house should be prepared for Michelagnolo, and caused him to eat at his own table with his sons and other persons of worth and quality. This was the second year of Michelagnolo's engagement to Domenico, and when the youth was fifteen or sixteen years old; he remained in the house of Lorenzo the Magnificent four years, to the death of Lorenzo namely, which took place in 1492: During all this time Michelagnolo received from the Magnifico an allowance of five ducats per month, and was furthermore presented for his gratification with a violet-coloured mantle; his father, likewise, had an office in the Customs conferred on him. . . .

Michelagnolo worked for his amusement almost every day at the group of four figures, of which I have before

made mention ; but he broke up the block at last, either because it was found to have numerous veins, was excessively hard, and often caused the chisel to strike fire, or because the judgment of this artist was so severe, that he could never content himself with anything that he did, a truth of which there is proof in the fact that few of his works, undertaken in manhood, were ever completed, those entirely finished having been the productions of his youth. Such for example were the Bacchus, the Pietà of the Madonna della Febbre, the Colossal Statue at Florence, and the Christ of the Minerva, which are finished to such perfection, that a single grain could not be taken from them without injury ; while the Statues of the Dukes Giuliano and Lorenzo, with those of Night, Aaron, Moses, and the two figures belonging to the latter, altogether not amounting to eleven statues, have still remained incomplete. The same may be said of many others ; indeed, Michelagnolo would often remark, that if he were compelled really to satisfy himself in the works to be produced, he should give little or nothing to public view. And the reason of this is obvious, he had proceeded to such an extent of knowledge in art, that the very slightest error could not exist in any figure without his immediate discovery thereof ; but having found such after the work had been given to view, he would never attempt to correct it, and would commence some other production, believing that the like failure would not happen again ; this then was, as he often declared, the cause wherefore the number of pictures and statues finished by his hand was so small.

34. VITTORIA COLONNA, MARCHESA DI PESCARA, AND  
MICHELANGELO.

[CONDIVI: *Vita di Michelagnolo Buonarroti*, edition 1553, p. 45.]

. . . And in particular he deeply loved the Marchesa di Pescara, whose divine spirit was beloved by him, and by whom he was in turn dearly loved. This love is shown in

many letters, full of true and chivalrous devotion, which he poured forth from his heart. He also wrote sonnets to her full of beauty and longing.

They met many times at Viterbo and other places where she went for pleasure or to pass the summer, and at Rome, where she went for no other reason than to see Michelangelo.

He had for her such love that I remember hearing him say that nothing gave him more pain than to think that when he went to see her as she passed out of this life he did not kiss her forehead nor her face as he had kissed her hand. Her death stunned him for a long time; indeed he seemed to have lost all power of feeling. He made at her request a nude Christ, who, taken from the cross, would, like a dead body, have fallen at the feet of His Holy Mother, had not two angels held Him up by the arms.

[Letter of MICHELANGELO to Fattucci, quoted in *Life of Michelangelo*, by Romain Rolland.]

I possess a little parchment book which she gave me some ten years ago. It contains one hundred and three sonnets ("Spiritual Sonnets" by Vittoria Colonna) without counting the forty on paper which she sent me from Viterbo, and which I have had bound in the same little book. . . . I have also many letters which she wrote me from Orvieto and Viterbo. That is what I possess of her.

### 35. DRAFT OF A LETTER WRITTEN BY LEONARDO DA VINCI TO LUDOVICO, DUKE OF MILAN.

[Quoted by EDWARD MACCURDY in *Leonardo da Vinci*, pp. 9-11.]

I can noiselessly construct to any prescribed point subterranean passages either straight or winding, passing if necessary underneath trenches or a river.

I can make armoured wagons carrying artillery which shall break through the most serried ranks of the enemy, and so open a safe passage for the infantry. . . .



. . . In time of peace I believe that I can give you as complete satisfaction as any one else in the construction of buildings both public and private and in conducting water from one place to another. I can further execute sculpture in marble, bronze, or clay. Also in painting I can do as much as anyone else whoever he may be.

Moreover, I would undertake the commission of the bronze horse, which shall endure with immortal glory and eternal honour the auspicious memory of your father and of the illustrious house of Sforza.

### 36. LEONARDO DA VINCI.

[VASARI: *Lives of Italian Painters*. Selected and prefaced by Havelock Ellis, pp. 118-124.]

The richest gifts are seen to be showered by celestial influence on certain human beings, sometimes supernaturally and marvellously congregating in one sole person; beauty, grace, and talent being united in such a manner, that to whatever such a man may turn, his every action is so divine as to leave all other men far behind him, and manifestly to prove that he has been endowed by God, and not by human teaching. This was seen in Leonardo da Vinci, in whom, beside his beauty of person, which has never been sufficiently extolled, there was more than infinite grace in all his actions, and who had besides so rare ability, that to whatever subject he turned, however difficult, he easily made himself absolute master of it. Extraordinary power was in his case conjoined with remarkable facility, a mind of regal boldness and magnanimous daring; his fame extended so widely that he was held in high estimation, not in his own time only, but also to a greater extent after his death. . . .

On the death of Giovanni Galeazzo, Duke of Milan, in the year 1493, Ludovico Sforza was chosen in the same year to be his successor, when Leonardo was invited with great honour to Milan by the Duke, who delighted greatly



in the music of the lute, to the end that the master might play before him; Leonardo therefore took with him a certain instrument which he had himself constructed almost wholly of silver, and in the shape of a horse's head, a new and fanciful form calculated to give more force and sweetness to the sound. Here Leonardo surpassed all the musicians who had assembled to perform before the Duke; he was besides one of the best *improvisatori* in verse existing at that time, and the Duke, enchanted with the admirable conversation of Leonardo, was so charmed by his varied gifts that he delighted beyond measure in his society, and prevailed on him to paint an altar-piece, the subject of which was the Nativity of Christ, which was sent by the Duke as a present to the Emperor. For the Dominican monks of Santa Maria delle Grazie at Milan he also painted a Last Supper, which is a most beautiful and admirable work; to the heads of the Apostles in this picture the master gave so much beauty and majesty that he was constrained to leave that of Christ unfinished, being convinced that he could not impart to it the divinity which should distinguish an image of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

### 37. LEONARDO DA VINCI'S NOTEBOOKS.

[EDWARD MACCURDY, London, 1906.]

Thou, O God, dost sell unto us all good things at the price of labour (p. 47).

Whoever in discussion adduces authority uses not intellect, but rather memory (p. 54).

*Fable* (p. 259).

A stone of considerable size, only recently left uncovered by the waters, stood in a certain spot, perched up at the edge of a delightful copse, above a stony road, surrounded by plants bright with various flowers of different colours

<sup>1</sup> This head, on the contrary, seems admirably finished, notwithstanding the ruined condition of the work to-day.

and looked upon the great mass of stones which lay heaped together in the road beneath, and she became filled with longing to let herself down there, saying within herself: "What am I doing here with these plants? I would fain dwell in the company of my sisters yonder"; and so letting herself fall she ended her rapid course among her desired companions. But when she had been there for a short time she found herself in continual distress from the wheels of the carts, the iron hoofs of the horses, and the feet of the passers-by. One rolled her over, another trampled upon her; and at times she raised herself up a little as she lay covered with mud or the dung of some animal, and vainly looked up at the place from whence she had departed as a place of solitude and quiet peace.

So it happens to those who, leaving the life of solitude and contemplation, choose to come and dwell in cities among people full of infinite wickedness.

### 38. BENEDETTO DEI'S LETTER TO VENETIANS, 1472.

[BENEDETTO DEI: *Cronica*, in Pagnini's *Della Decima*, vol. ii., p. 240.]

We have two crafts worthier and greater than any four in your city of Venice, and they are wool and silk. Evidence of this is given by the Courts of Rome and of the King of Naples, by the Marches, Sicily, Constantinople, Rhodes, Scio, Pera, Broussa, Gallipoli, Salonica, Adrianople, and other places to which the Florentines send their cloth and where they have banks, houses, shops, merchants, and consuls, Florentine churches—to your contempt and shame.

As to cloths of silk and gold brocade, ribbons of silver and of all other kinds, of these they have made, do and will make more than as much as your city of Venice, Genoa, and Lucca make all together.

That this is true your merchants and others can testify who come to Lyons and into France, to Bruges, London,

Antwerp, Avignon, Geneva, into Provence, and to Marseilles, in all of which places we have flourishing banks and exchanges, worthy merchants, princely shops and houses, well-built residences, churches and consuls and rich dresses, such as your people have when they go annually to the fairs.

### 39. FLORENCE IN 1472.

[BENEDETTO DEI: *Cronica*, in Pagnini's *Della Decima*, vol. ii., p. 275.]

Florence the beautiful has 270 workshops belonging to the Guild of Wool within the city. . . . They make cloth for Rome, Florence, Sicily, Naples, etc. There are 83 shops of the Guild of Silk. Splendid stuffs of great price are made, and cloth of silk, gold brocade, damask, velvet, satin, taffeta for Rome, Naples, Catalonia, Spain, Seville, Turkey, and for the fairs of the Marches and Genoa, and for Barbary, Avignon, London, Antwerp, Lyons, Montpellier, Florence, Ferrara, Mantua, and all Italy. . . .

Florence the beautiful has 66 shops of the apothecaries and 84 carpenters—inlaid-wood workers' and carvers' shops—and 54 shops of stone-cutters—marble and granite . . . and 70 butchers' shops within the city and 8 poulterers' and game shops . . . 30 shops of silver beaters, silver thread makers and famous makers of wax figures . . . also 44 goldsmith's shops, silversmiths and jewellers within the city.

### 40. SAVONAROLA'S LETTER TO HIS FATHER ON BECOMING A MONK, 1475.

[*Alcune lettere di Fra Girolamo Savonarola*, Firenze, 1858.]

HONOURED FATHER,

I do not doubt that you have suffered enough over my departure, and the more because I went away from you secretly. But I would fain make you understand my

mind and my will by this letter so that you may be comforted and that you may understand that I did not act childishly, as some think. . . .

First, the reason which moved me to enter the religious life was this. First the great misery of the world, the wickedness of men, the immorality, the robberies, the pride, the idolatry, the dreadful cruelties that this age has come to, so that no one can be found who does good. . . . Answer me this, is it not great virtue in a man to fly the defilements and wickedness of this miserable world, that he may live as a rational being and not as a beast among the swine? And would it not have been great ingratitude in me to have prayed God to show me the right path in which to walk and afterwards, when He had deigned to show it me, not to have accepted it? . . .

So, dearest father, you should rather thank the Lord Jesus than weep that he has given you a son and that you have kept him well enough to his twenty-second year, and not only that, but that He has deigned to make him His knight. Oh! do you not think yourself honoured enough to have a son a knight of Jesus Christ? . . . I shall not cease to pray you that you, being strong, shall comfort my mother, and I pray you both to give me your blessing and I will always pray fervently for your souls. . . .

HIERONYMUS SAVONAROLA,  
Your son.

#### 41. THE CATHEDRAL SERMONS.

[BURLAMACCHI: *Vita di Savonarola*, edition 1761, p. 85.]

There came always bands of people to hear the sermons and from the rugged mountain sides there rode in the country people, and all night long they travelled to Florence, so that in the morning when the door opened a great crowd entered, all going straight in to take their places. And there were not wanting rich citizens, full of

charity, who had the goodness to give them food and drink and lodging; they took into their houses as many as twenty or thirty or forty strangers at a time, of those who had come to the sermon. They went out spontaneously and invited them, competing with one another to do so: they met them at the gate of the city, so that it seemed like the time of the primitive Church. . . . At the door of the cathedral the people, waiting till it should be open, made no account of any inconvenience, neither of the cold, nor of the wind, nor of standing in winter with their feet on the marble. Among them were old and young, women and children, of every sort, who came with such joy and gladness that it was wonderful to hear them, going to the sermon as to a wedding. Inside the church the silence was great, each one going to his place; those who could read, with a taper in their hand, said the office, and others said other prayers; and though there were many thousands of people all together, you would not even hear a "hush" until the arrival of the children, who sang hymns with so much sweetness that heaven seemed to have opened. So they waited three or four hours till the Father [Savonarola] entered the pulpit, and the attention which you saw in this great mass of people was marvellous, all with eyes and ears intent on the preacher, without weariness, so that when the sermon was ended it seemed to them it had scarcely begun.

*Sermon on the Wednesday before Palm Sunday, 1496.*

I hear that the officers of the Monte di Pietà have been elected. . . . The children shall march in procession in honour of this.

#### 42. THE PROCESSION.

[BURLAMACCHI: *Vita di Savonarola*, p. 119.]

First having heard Mass, all communicated, and with palms in their hands went to the sermon in the cathedral,



at which the children assembled in such multitudes that they occupied that morning all the four parts of the galleries (round the walls).

When it was over they all went to the church of the Annunziata, from there they set out and went to the door of the first cloister of St. Mark's; entering through the cloister they came to the church, where they gave to each a red cross. Leaving St. Mark's, they went by the Via Larga to St. John's, where they went in, in pairs, grouped according to their quarters in the town. The procession was followed humbly and devotedly by the bearers of the tabernacle, whereon was painted the Saviour, seated on the ass and surrounded by many people, who strewed their garments on the ground, and it seemed as if they sang in a loud voice, "Hosanna to the Son of David." Facing it there was a painting of a Virgin of marvellous beauty with the crown which was presented to her by the Father [Savonarola] when he went as ambassador [to the King of France], and the crown was borne up by angels. After the tabernacle came many pairs of children in the guise of most beautiful angels, who seemed to have come out of Paradise. There were eight thousand of them, and it was a marvellous thing, taking into account their order, the distance they walked, their silence. Thus they marched, singing psalms with great fervour and spirit and saying the office.

Many of them carried dishes in their hands in which to receive alms for the Monte de Pietà (Public Loan Offices). After the children walked in order the monks, and then the clergy, followed by a large number of men (seculars), with the red crosses and an olive-branch in their hands. Then came the girls dressed in white with garlands on their heads, and at the end all the women.

So great was the zeal that day that not only children and women, but even grave and noble men, full of wisdom and prudence, forgetting this worldly wisdom, robed



themselves in white like the children, and danced and sang before the tabernacle of the Saviour as did David before the Ark. Despising the world's pomps, they held the olive-branches and red crosses in their hands, and they shouted ceaselessly, in high voices like the children, "Long live Christ, our King." And there was such joy in their hearts that it seemed as if the glory of Paradise had descended to earth; and many tears of joy and devotion were shed. They came in this manner to the Piazza di Signoria, where they sang some verses in honour of the day by Girolamo Benevieni, one of which begins:

"Live long in our hearts, long live Fiorenza [Florence]."

And from the piazza (square), still singing and rejoicing, they went round the city, coming at last to the cathedral church of St. Mary of the Flowers. They entered and offered to God their hearts and spirits, committing to Him the city, and offering all the alms, which they had received in large quantities for the Monte di Pietà. Not only were the children's dishes full of money, rings, jewels, and other precious things, but also many other dishes, which were placed on an altar of marvellous grandeur, which stood under the cupola of the church, where there was much valuable clothing and a large quantity of gold and silver. With this money there were established four Monti di Pietà, one for each quarter of the city. This was the means of turning out the Jews who lent money on usury in the city. When these offerings and thanksgiving to God had been made, they returned to the Piazza of St. Mark, where all the monks came out of the convent without hoods and wearing the alb and crowned with garlands. They formed a round dance through the square, singing psalms, thinking nothing of appearances, and the sweetness of their singing caused everyone to dissolve into tears of happiness.

And afterwards all went home much edified. It was

in truth a wonderful day, full of joy and exultation, during which everyone seemed almost driven mad by love for Christ, and Florence was by this mystery become a new Jerusalem.

#### 43. CHARLES VIII. IN FLORENCE, 1494.

[GUICCIARDINI: *Opere inedite, Storia Fiorentina*, vol. iii., p. 118.]

Things remained in this state of unrest for days and the city was in terror, as was natural to people not accustomed to arms, when they saw in their midst a powerful army.

On the other hand, the French, seeing the people were numerous and hearing how at the expulsion of Piero they had at the sound of the great bell all taken up their arms, and that the people of the surrounding district would all have done the same, were also somewhat afraid. They mounted guard and took great care that the bells were not rung, so their fear was lessened; and although two or three times rumours sprang up as it were from the ground, and the French rushed to arms, nevertheless the rumours were born of fear, and nothing came of them. Francesco Valori, Piero Capponi, Biaccio Martelli, and several other citizens were deputed to confer with the king, and having agreed as to the terms, they took to the king a draft of those terms the city would agree to, and this not pleasing him, he made another draft in accordance with which he was willing to come to an agreement. Then because much of it was disgraceful, Piero Capponi took it and most courageously tore it to pieces before the king's eyes, replying that since he would not agree things would be settled in another way, and that if he sounded his trumpets they would sound their bells; surely words of a great and courageous man, for he was in the house of a King of France, who was barbarous and arrogant, where there was danger that savage deeds would follow on angry words. The king and his followers were alarmed seeing such spirit and full of doubt already because of the number

of the people and because of the great bell, at the sound of which they were sure that from the city and surrounding district armed men to the number of over 30,000 would rush violently out, so that, it is thought, through such threats they abandoned the most shameful terms, and drew up more reasonable conditions. Finally, after much discussion they came to an agreement with him on November 25, 1494. It was sworn to at Santa Reparata in the presence of the King, the Signoria, and all the people, he swearing personally on the sacred stone of the high altar to observe these terms.

They pledged themselves to friendship and peace, a federation and league between the King of France and ourselves, following the general form of other leagues, friendship for friendship, foe for foe, on condition that the city paid, for damages and losses to King Charles, 120,000 gold ducats, of which he was to have 50,000 before leaving the city, and the other 70,000 in two payments within certain limits of time, diverse but short.

The king should hold for security during the war and his expedition into the kingdom of Naples the fortresses of Pisa, Leghorn, Pietra Santa, and Lerezania, leaving, however, the government and the revenues of the inhabitants of these places to the Florentines, as was the case before his coming; the undertaking in Naples being finished, he would be obliged to restore them freely and without any exception.

#### 44. THE SEIZURE OF SAVONAROLA IN THE CONVENT, 1498.

[BURLAMACCHI: *Vita di Savonarola*, p. 151.]

He confessed to Fra Domenico da Pescia and took the communion in the first library. Fra Domenico did the same. Afterwards, having eaten a little food, he was somewhat refreshed, and spoke his last words to the

brothers, exhorting them to stand fast in their religion, and kissing them all, took leave of them. As he was going one of his sons said to him, "Father, why do you abandon us and leave us thus desolate?" To which he replied, "My son, have patience. God will help you," and added that if he lived he would see them again. or after death he would see them anyhow. As he went he gave the keys to the brothers, with such humility and affection that they could not restrain their tears, and many of them wanted in any case to go with him. At last, urging them to return to their prayers, he went towards the door of the library, where the first commissaries, fully armed, awaited him. He gave himself into their hands like the gentlest lamb, saying, "I leave to your care this my flock and all these other citizens." When he was in the corridor of the library, he said, "My brothers, do not fall into doubt. God will not fail to make His work perfect. Though I may be dead, I shall help you more than I have in life, and I shall come in some way to comfort you whether I be living or dead." As he took the holy water, which was at the entrance of the choir, Father Domenico said to him, "I, too, would go to this marriage feast." Some of his lay friends at the request of the Signoria surrounded him. When Fra Girolamo was in the first cloister Fra Benedetto, the miniature painter, begged to be allowed to go with him; pushing back the commissaries, he implored permission. But Fra Girolamo turned to him, saying, "Fra Benedetto, for the sake of holy obedience do not come. I and Fra Domenico have to die for the love of Christ." At this he was snatched away from the eyes of his sons, who wept at the parting,

It was already nine o'clock. Coming out of the convent the tumult was so great and the hooting of the people so loud that many thought he had been killed immediately by his enemies, but those who were conducting him made

a fence of shields and spears round his head, so that he was neither killed nor wounded. They could not, however, avoid the insults, the mockery, the many blows, the kicks which all along the road he suffered, walking with his hands bound behind him like some criminal. One wretched creature twisted his fingers with great violence, but Andrea de' Medici, one of the commissaries who were taking him to the palace, seeing this, freed him from the man.

#### 45. SANDRO BOTTICELLI.

[VASARI : *Lives of Italian Painters*. Selected and prefaced by Havelock Ellis, pp. 102-104.]

In the same time with the illustrious Lorenzo de' Medici the elder, which was truly an age of gold for men of talent, there flourished a certain Alessandro, called after our custom Sandro, and further named Di Botticelli. . . .

There was at that time a close connection and almost constant intercourse between the goldsmiths and the painters, wherefore Sandro, who possessed considerable ingenuity, and was strongly disposed to the arts of design, became enamoured of painting, and resolved to devote himself entirely to that vocation. . . .

Pope Sixtus IV., having erected the chapel built by him in his place at Rome, and desiring to have it adorned with paintings, commanded that Sandro Botticelli should be appointed superintendent of the work. He accordingly executed various pictures there. By these works Botticelli obtained great honour and reputation among the many competitors who were labouring with him, whether Florentines or natives of other cities, and received from the Pope a considerable sum of money ; but this he consumed and squandered totally, during his residence in Rome, where he lived without due care, as was his habit. Having completed the work assigned to him, he returned at once to Florence, where, being whimsical and eccentric,



he occupied himself by commenting on a certain part of Dante, illustrating the *Inferno*, and executing prints, over which he wasted much time, and, neglecting his proper occupation, he did no work, and thereby caused infinite disorder in his affairs. He likewise engraved many of the designs he had executed, but in a very inferior manner, the work being badly cut. The best attempt of this kind from his hand is the Triumph of Faith, by Fra Girolamo Savonarola, of Ferrara, of whose sect our artist was so zealous a partisan that he totally abandoned painting, and not having any other means of living, he fell into very great difficulties. But his attachment to the party he had adopted increased; he became what was then called a *Piagnone*, and abandoned all labour, insomuch that, finding himself at length become old, being also very poor, he must have died of hunger had he not been supported by Lorenzo de' Medici, for whom he had worked at the small hospital of Volterra and other places, who assisted him while he lived, as did other friends and admirers of his talents. . . .



## EVENTS IN FLORENTINE HISTORY, 1400-1500.

- 1402. Death of Gian Galeazzo, Duke of Milan.
- 1406. Surrender of Pisa to Florence.
- 1409. War between France and Naples.
- 1411. Establishment of two new Florentine Councils, to which questions of peace and war must be submitted.
- 1417. Outbreak of plague in Florence. Pope Martin V. elected : his reception at Florence.
- 1421. Leghorn bought by Florence.
- 1421-7. War with the Visconti.
- 1427. New system of taxation in Florence (the *Catasto*).
- 1429. Siege of Lucca.
- 1433. Arrest and exile of Cosimo de' Medici.
- 1434. Recall of Cosimo.
- 1439. Council of the Church met at Florence.
- 1440. League against the Visconti.
- 1450. Capture of Milan by Francesco Sforza.
- 1457. Death of Neri Capponi (opponent of Cosimo).
- 1464. Death of Cosimo de' Medici.
- 1464. Piero di Cosimo de' Medici (Il Gottoso).
- 1466. The party of the Mountain (anti-Medicean) crushed.
- 1469. Death of Piero.
- 1471. Council appointed to control composition of Signoria and the One Hundred.
- 1478. Pazzi conspiracy.
- 1479. Lorenzo de' Medici goes to Naples.
- 1480. The Council of Seventy created.
- 1491. Savonarola, Prior of St. Mark's.
- 1492. Giuliano de' Medici proclaimed Cardinal.
- 1492. Death of Lorenzo de' Medici.
- 1494. Flight of Piero de' Medici. Charles VIII. of France in Florence.
- 1495. Changes in Florentine Constitution.
- 1498. Execution of Savonarola.

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